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SACRED SCENES;

OR,

PASSAGES IN THE LIFE

OF

Our Saviour.

BY VARIOUS EMINENT WRITERS.

PHILADELPHIA
1851

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P R E F A C E .

THERE is one great fact of such paramount importance and influence on the destinies of the human race, that it cannot be too often presented to our notice, or too earnestly commended to our serious attention; and this fact is the descent and the actual bodily presence of our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth. As this act and its concomitant circumstances, wrought out the work of redemption, so the due consideration and study of it, the full belief in it, and the heart feelings which that belief insures, do now work out the salvation of all true believers in our Lord.

Any attempt, therefore, to make this fact more familiar to men,—more real, more actual—is entitled to notice. In the work now offered to the public, the editor has presented some of the most striking scenes in our Lord's history, as described by eminent writers in prose and verse, premising, however, that no descriptions can be so vivid and effective as those of the evangelists themselves. Still descriptions by other writers have many important uses. They suggest many accompanying incidents; they explain the text; and

what is still more important, they send us back to the original text with more earnest desire and more reverential love than ever. From the words of men we turn to the Word of God, as from the light of the lesser luminaries to that of the glorious sun in the firmament.

But the editor's chief reliance for the extended utility of this little book, is on the plates which adorn it. This declaration may seem singular; but it involves a truth which most people act upon unconsciously. All love pictures. All are more or less interested in them; but all are not conscious of the hold which art maintains on our inmost affections when it is applied to the illustration of sacred truth. Illustrations of the Bible, and especially of the acts of our Saviour, are not only acceptable to the people, but they are useful in the highest sense of the word. These holy pictures convey a lesson straight to the heart of every true believer in the Saviour. However far the artist may fall short of our ideal, in his delineation of our Lord's person, we instinctively respect his intention, and yield ourselves willingly to the belief which it is the purpose of his work to inspire. The great truth, that our Lord descended from Heaven to take upon himself the human form, to combat with and conquer the power of evil, and thus to redeem the world and achieve the deliverance of mankind from the slavery of sin, to fight the greatest battle for human freedom that ever was fought upon earth,—this great truth is suggested by every picture of the Saviour;—and the sublime utility of the suggestion consecrates the humblest

effort of Christian art, and commends it to our love and reverence. In looking at them our hearts say, "Thus He lived on earth; thus He taught; thus He healed; thus He suffered; thus He died; thus He rose, and thus He ascended to heaven to be the eternal Saviour, the ever-present inspirer of devotion, the never-ceasing Fountain of Wisdom and Love.

SACRED SCENES.



THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR.

BY THE REV. HENRY BLUNT, A. M.

THE manner of our Lord's advent was remarkable, and, until God's own word had revealed the mystery, incomprehensible.

“A virgin was to conceive and bear a son;” a new thing the Lord was to create upon the earth, “a woman was to compass a man,” that so a body was to be prepared for the incarnation of the eternal Son of God without spot of pollution, or taint of sin, in which he should do and suffer the will of his God. Our church, in her admirable Litany, has with peculiar propriety and precision called this the “mystery of Christ's holy incarnation;” and well would it be if her members were guided by the same spirit of deep humility which

influenced her when she thus expressed herself. We should not then have been called to combat the fearful heresy of Christ's sinful humanity, or have heard language applied to the immaculate Jesus, which cannot but lead us to tremble for the spiritual welfare of those who use it. It is enough for the humble-minded Christian to be assured that the incarnation is a mystery, and a holy mystery; that the miraculous conception of the Virgin was, as the angel of God had pronounced it, a "holy thing;" that he who was born of her was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," partaking of all the innocent infirmities of our nature, and of none other. So much God has been pleased to reveal even of this high mystery, and therefore this is the believer's portion; over all beyond, the same God has thrown an impenetrable veil, and the true child of God will sit down in faith and patience before that veil, waiting contentedly for the coming day when it shall be drawn aside by God's own hand, and the inscrutable secrets as well as the unutterable glories which lie within it, shall be made the subject of the clearest vision.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." Joseph, his reputed father, having been warned by the angel of the Lord that Mary, his espoused wife, had been selected from among all the daughters of men to be the mother of the Messiah, and that that holy thing which should be born of her should be called the Son of God, no longer feared to take unto him Mary his wife. While they were dwelling together in Nazareth, a city of Galilee, in holy expectation

of that great event, which was the "desire of all nations," a decree was passed by the Roman emperor, that all persons throughout the empire, then embracing the larger portion of the known world, should be enrolled. In consequence of this decree, Joseph and Mary, as the lineal descendants of David, left Nazareth, and journeyed to Bethlehem, his native city, a small town distant about sixty miles from the place in which they were then resident: thus fulfilling, under the most improbable circumstances—circumstances over which they themselves had no control—the important prophecy of Micah, that out of Bethlehem should "He come forth who was to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Remarkable evidence have we here of the manner in which the prophecies of the Most High are brought to pass! The Roman Emperor, seated upon his throne, knowing nothing and caring nothing for the God who placed him there, issues a decree, the result of his own vainglory, to enroll the names, and occupations, and properties, of the widely-spreading myriads who acknowledged his authority; and all for what purpose, and for what high and mighty end? That a poor carpenter should be obliged to undertake a journey of sixty miles, at a time when nothing but compulsion would have induced him, that so the Church of God throughout all ages might have unquestioned and unquestionable evidence to the identity of the child now to be born with him "of whom Moses and the Prophets did write." Blessed be God that we have this "more sure word of pro-

phesy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

Having arrived at Bethlehem, they found, as might naturally have been expected, that this little town was crowded to excess by the influx which the decree of the emperor had occasioned. "And so it was," says the inspired historian, "that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." We sometimes hear the Christian, and the true Christian, speak in tones which appear not wholly destitute of self-gratulation, of having renounced the world, foregone its vanities and its splendors, and given up, it may be, some one of the thousand comforts and luxuries with which their cup is filled, for the honor and glory of God, and for the sake of the Redeemer. Some of you, perhaps, can recollect the manifestation of no very dissimilar state of feeling, even by an apostle, by one whose heart beat high with love to his Redeemer, and who rejoiced in the prospect of attending his career of poverty and suffering, and yet who could not so completely silence the feelings of the natural man, as to repress the vainglorious exclamation, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." Turn, then, for a moment from such examples, from the very highest example which man can offer, to this, of "the King of kings, and Lord of lords;" see him voluntarily descending from the

most exalted throne in heaven to the lowest, poorest, humblest station upon earth. Dwell for a moment in imagination upon this amazing scene, upon this wondrous effort of redeeming love, and then say, are you not ashamed of the manner in which you overrate your sacrifices and your self-denials of the cause, or for the sake of Christ! Behold the Ancient of Days, whose goings forth have been from everlasting, condescending, for you, and for your salvation, to become a child a span long; look into the manger at Bethlehem, and see him lying there a little helpless babe; you need not carry on your thoughts to the thirty years of misery which awaited him, while thus "coming unto his own, and his own receiving him not;" bearing their rejection, suffering their contempt, perishing from their cruelty. No! this opening scene is sufficient to convict us all. We have need to blush and be ashamed for the poor, miserable pittance of self-denial, devotedness, and love, which we are returning for this costly sacrifice. At such a sight, the language of our hearts should be, "Lord, nothing which I possess is too good for thee; nothing which thou hast ever given shall be withheld from thee, if thou demandest it; myself, my soul, my body, all, all are at thy disposal, my best but a blemished sacrifice, and myself an unprofitable servant."

But I would yet once more call you to look for a passing moment into the stable at Bethlehem, and draw from thence another lesson. I do not refer to this humble and obscure abode, that the view may exalt your ideas of the infinite hu-

mility and self-abasement of the Incarnate Son ; for to have been born the noblest potentate that earth has ever seen would have exhibited as large a share of humility, and have been in itself as deep a degradation for one so unspeakably glorious, as to pass for the son of that poor carpenter, and to lie in that obscure and humble stable ; but I call upon you to view him there, that you may rightly estimate the value of all earthly distinctions in the sight of God. They are, doubtless for wise and admirable purposes, not only permitted, but appointed by himself ; but when we see him thus, in the person of the only-begotten Son, selecting from them all the poor man's lot in which to visit us, we must surely feel, that there is naturally in our minds, and in our hearts, an overweening attachment to the great things of the world, its glittering follies, and its splendid lies, which ought to be uprooted and subdued before we can, as we are bound, resemble him whose name we bear. Surely the first faint and feeble cry which issued from the manger of Bethlehem said, in language which cannot be misunderstood, " My kingdom is not of this world." " Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Surely we cannot be, in heart and in life, the followers of this self-denying Saviour, unless we are content with the portion of this world's good which he sees fit to bestow upon us, however small ; unless we are willing to lay down, without repining, our worldly blessings, however dear, and to acknowledge, heartily and sincerely to acknowledge, that we had rather be

“rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom,” than rank among the wealthiest, or take our place among the noblest of the world.

We pass on to the first incident recorded by the inspired writers, after the birth of our divine Saviour. “There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

How inscrutable are the ways of God! Of all classes of men, thus to select those who were least favored by outward circumstances; of all orders of intellect, thus to choose those least enlarged by education or culture, to whom first to communicate the wonderful intelligence of the salvation of a world! O, what honor was that day poured upon the humble and the lowly among the sons of men, who gain their daily bread by daily labor, when crowned kings and mitred priests were passed over, and the poor shepherd at his midnight watch was selected to be the first depositary of the glorious intelligence!

THE NATIVITY.

CAMPBELL.

WHEN Jordan hush'd his waters still,
And silence slept on Zion's hill,—
When Bethlehem's shepherds through the night
Watched o'er their flocks by starry night.—

Hark! from the midnight hills around,
A voice of more than mortal sound,
In distant hallelujahs stole,
Wild murmuring o'er the raptur'd soul.

Then swift to every startled eye,
New streams of glory light the sky;
Heaven bursts her azure gates to pour
Her spirits to the midnight hour.

On wheels of light, on wings of flame,
The glorious hosts of Zion came,—
High heaven with songs of triumph rang,
While thus they struck their harps and sang.—

O, Zion! lift thy raptured eye,
The long-expected hour is nigh:
The joys of nature rise again,—
The Prince of Salem comes to reign.

See Mercy from her golden urn
Pours a rich stream to them that mourn;
Behold, she binds with tender care,
The bleeding bosom of despair.

He comes, to cheer the trembling heart,
Bids Satan and his host depart:
Again the day-star gilds the gloom,—
Again the bowers of Eden bloom.

O, Zion, lift thy raptur'd eye,
The long-expected hour is nigh:
The joys of nature rise again,—
The Prince of Salem comes to reign.

ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS.

BY BISHOP TAYLOR.

1. ALTHOUGH the birth of Christ was destitute of the usual excrescences and less necessary pomps which used to signify and illustrate the birth of princes; yet his first humility was made glorious with presages, miracles, and significations from heaven, which did not only, like the furniture of a princely bedchamber, speak the riches of the parent, or greatness of the son, but did declare to all the world that their prince was born, publishing it with figures and representations almost as great as its empire.

2. For when all the world did expect that in Judea should be born their prince, and when the incredulous world had in their observation slipped by their true prince, because he came not in pompous and secular illustrations; upon that very stock, Vespasian was nursed up in hope of the Roman empire, and that hope made him great in designs, and they being prosperous made his fortunes correspond to his hopes,



The Adoration of the Shepherds

and he was endeared and engaged upon that fortune by the prophecy, which was never intended him by the prophet. But the fortune of the Roman monarchy was not great enough for this prince designed by the old prophets. And, therefore, it was not without the influence of a divinity, that his predecessor Augustus, about the time of Christ's nativity, refused to be called LORD; possibly it was, to entertain the people with some hopes of restitution of their liberties, till he had griped the monarchy with a stricter and faster hold; but the Christians were apt to believe, that it was upon the prophecy of a sibyl foretelling the birth of a greater prince, to whom all the world should pay adoration; and that the prince was about that time born in Judea, the oracle, which was dumb to Augustus's question, told him unasked, the devil having no tongue permitted him, but one to proclaim that a Hebrew child was his Lord and enemy.

3. At the birth of which child there was a universal peace throughout all the world.* For then it was that Augustus Cæsar having composed all the wars of the world, did the third time cause the gates of Janus's temple to be shut; and this peace continued for twelve years, even till the extreme old age of the prince, until rust had sealed the

* "Although we cannot subscribe to the opinion of those writers who, being led into a mistake by Orosius, have asserted, that at the time of our Saviour's birth the temple of Janus was shut, and every part of the Roman world in profound peace, it must be admitted, that if the period be compared with antecedent times, it may justly be called the age of peace and tranquillity."—*Mosheim's Com.*

temple doors, which opened not till the sedition of the Athenians and the rebellion of the Dacians caused Augustus to arm. For he that was born was the Prince of Peace, and came to reconcile God with man, and man with his brother; and to make, by the sweetness of his example, and the influence of a holy doctrine, such happy atonements between disagreeing natures, such confederations and societies between enemies, that "the wolf and the lamb should lie down together," and a little child boldly and without danger put his finger in the nest and cavern of an asp: and it could be no less than miraculous, that so great a body as the Roman empire, consisting of so many parts, whose constitutions were different, their humors contrary, their interests contradicting each other's greatness, and all these violently oppressed by an usurping power, should have no limbs out of joint, not so much as an aching tooth or a rebelling humor in that huge collection of parts; but so it seemed good in the eye of Heaven, by so great and good a symbol, to declare not only the greatness, but the goodness of the prince that was then born in Judea, the Lord of all the world.

4. But because the heavens, as well as the earth, are his creatures, and do serve him, at his birth he received a sign in heaven above, as well as in the earth beneath, as a homage paid to their common Lord. For as certain "shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night," near that part where Jacob did use to feed his cattle when he was in the land of Canaan, "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." Needs

must the shepherds be afraid, when an angel came arrayed in glory, and clothed their persons in a robe of light, great enough to confound their senses and scatter their understandings. But the angel said unto them, "Fear not, for I bring unto you tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The shepherds needed not be invited to go to see this glorious sight; but, lest their fancy should rise up to an expectation of a prince as externally glorious as might be hoped for upon the consequence of so glorious an apparition, the angel, to prevent the mistake, told them of a sign, which indeed was no other than the thing signified; but yet was, therefore, a sign, because it was so remote from the common probability and expectation of such a birth, that by being a miracle, so great a prince should be born so poorly, it became an instrument to signify itself and all the other parts of mysterious consequence. For the angel said, "This shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

5. But as light, when it first begins to gild the east, scatters indeed the darkness from the earth, but ceases not to increase its flame till it hath made perfect day: so it happened now in this apparition of the angel of light, he appeared and told his message, and did shine, but the light arose higher and higher, till midnight was as bright as mid-day; "for suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host:" and after the angel had told his mes-

sage in plain song, the whole chorus joined in descant, and sang a hymn to the tune and sense of heaven, where glory is paid to God in eternal and never-ceasing offices, and whence good-will descends upon men in perpetual and never-stopping torrents. Their song was, "Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good-will towards men:" by this song not only referring to the strange peace which at that time put all the world in ease, but to the great peace which this new-born Prince should make between his Father and all mankind.

6. As soon as the blessed choristers had sung their Christmas carol, and taught the Church a hymn to put into her offices forever in the anniversary of this festivity, "the angels returned into heaven, and the shepherds went to Bethlehem, to see this thing which the Lord had made known unto them. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." Just as the angel had prepared their expectation, they found the narrative verified, and saw the glory and the mystery of it, by that representment which was made by the heavenly ministers; seeing GOD through the veil of a child's flesh, the heir of heaven wrapped in swaddling clothes, and a person to whom the angels did minister laid in a manger; and they beheld, and wondered, and worshipped.

7. But as precious liquor warmed and heightened by a flame first crowns the vessel, and then dances over its brim into the fire, increasing the cause of its own motion and extravagancy; so it happened to the shepherds, whose hearts

being filled with the oil of gladness up unto the brim, the joy ran over, as being too big to be confined in their own breasts, and did communicate itself, growing greater by such dissemination: for "when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child." "And" (as well they might) "all that heard it wondered." But Mary, having first changed her joy into wonder, turned her wonder into entertainments of the mystery, and the mystery into a fruition and cohabitation with it: for "Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart." And the shepherds having seen what the angels did upon the publication of the news, which less concerned them than us, had learned their duty, to sing in honor to God for the nativity of Christ: for "the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

8. But the angels had told the shepherds that the nativity was "glad tidings of great joy unto all people;" and, that "the heavens might declare the glory of God, and the firmament show his handiwork," this also was told abroad even to the Gentiles by a sign from heaven, by the message of a star. For there was a prophecy of Balaam, famous in all the eastern country, and recorded by Moses, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel: out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion." Which although in its first sense it signified David, who was the conqueror of the Moabites; yet, in its more mysterious and chiefly-intended sense, it related to the Son

of David. And in expectation of the event of this prophecy, the Arabians, the sons of Abraham by Keturah, whose portion, given by their patriarch, was gold, frankincense, and myrrh; who were great lovers of astronomy; did with diligence expect the revelation of a mighty prince in Judea, at such time when a miraculous and extraordinary star should appear; and therefore, "when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, there came wise men," inspired by God, taught by art, and persuaded by prophecy, "from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him." The Greeks suppose this, which was called a star, to have been indeed an angel in a pillar of fire, and the semblance of a star; and it is made the more likely, by coming and standing directly over the humble roof of his nativity; which is not discernible in the station of a star, though it be supposed to be lower than the orb of the moon. To which if we add, that they only saw it, (so far as we know,) and that it appeared, as it were, by voluntary periods, it will not be very improbable but that it might be like the angel that went before the sons of Israel in a pillar of fire by night, or rather like the little shining stars sitting upon the bodies of Probus, Tharacus, and Andronicus, the martyrs, when their bodies were searched for, in the days of Diocletian, and pointed out by those bright angels.

9. This star did not trouble Herod, till the Levantine princes expounded the mysteriousness of it, and said it de-

clared a "king to be born in Jewry," and that the star was his; not applicable to any signification, but of a king's birth. And therefore, although it was no prodigy nor comet, foretelling diseases, plagues, war, and death, but only the happy birth of a most excellent prince; yet it brought affrightment to Herod and all Jerusalem. For "when Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." And thinking that the question of the kingdom was now in dispute, and an heir sent from heaven to lay challenge to it, (who brought a star and the learning of the East with him for evidence and probation of his title,) Herod thought there was no security to his usurped possession, unless he could rescind the decrees of Heaven, and reverse the results and eternal counsels of predestination. And he was resolved to venture it, first by craft, and then by violence.

10. And first, "he called the chief priests and scribes of the people together, and demanded of them, where CHRIST should be born;" and found, by their joint determination, that Bethlehem of Judea was the place designed by ancient prophecy and God's decree. Next he inquired of the wise men concerning the star, but privily, what time it appeared. For the star had not a motion certain and regular by the laws of nature; but it so guided the wise men in their journey, that it stood when they stood, moved not when they rested, and went forward when they were able; making no more haste than they did, who carried much of the business and employment of the star along with them. But when

Herod was satisfied in his questions, he sent them to Bethlehem, with instructions to search diligently for the young child, and to bring him word; pretending that he would come and worship him also.

11. The wise men prosecuted the business of their journey, and having heard the king, they departed, and the star (which, as it seems, attended their motion) went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was; where when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Such a joy as is usual to wearied travellers when they are entering into their inn; such a joy as when our hopes and greatest longings are laying hold upon the proper objects of their desires; a joy of certainty immediately before the possession: for that is the greatest joy, which possesses before it is satisfied, and rejoices with a joy not abated by the surfeits of possession, but heightened with all the apprehensions and fancies of hope, and the neighborhood of fruition; a joy of nature, of wonder, and of religion. And now their hearts labored with a throng of spirits and passions, and ran into the house to welcome Jesus, even before their feet; but when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother. And possibly their expectation was something lessened and their wonder heightened, when they saw their hope empty of pomp and gayety; the great king's throne, to be a manger; a stable to be his chamber of presence; a thin court, and no ministers; and the king himself a lovely babe, and, but that he had a star over his head, nothing to distinguish him from the com-

mon condition of children, or to exempt him from the miseries of a poor and empty fortune.

12. This did not scandalize those wise persons; but, being convinced by that testimony from heaven, and the union of all circumstances, they fell down and worshipped him, after the manner of the Orientalists, when they do veneration to their kings; not with an empty *avé* and gay blessing of fine words, but they bring presents, and come into his courts; for “when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” And if these gifts were mysterious, beyond the acknowledgment of him to be the King of the Jews, and Christ, that should come into the world; frankincense might signify him to be acknowledged a God, myrrh to be a man, and gold to be a king. Unless we choose by gold to signify the acts of mercy, by myrrh the chastity of minds and purity of our bodies, to the incorruption of which, myrrh is especially instrumental; and by incense we intend our prayers, as the most apt presents and oblations to the honor and service of this young king. But however the fancies of religion may represent variety of ideas, the act of adoration was direct and religious, and the myrrh was medicinal to his tender body; the incense was possibly no more than was necessary in a stable, the first throne of his humility; and the gold was a good antidote against the present indigences of his poverty. Presents such as these were used in all the Levant (especially in Arabia and Saba, to which the growth of myrrh and frankincense were proper) in their addresses to their

God and to their king; and were instruments with which, under the veil of flesh, they worshipped the eternal Word; the wisdom of God under infant innocency; the almighty power in so great weakness; and under the lowness of human nature, the altitude of majesty and the infinity of divine glory. And so was verified the prediction of the prophet Isaiah, under the type of the son of the prophetess, "Before a child shall have knowledge to cry my father and my mother, he shall take the spoil of Damascus and Samaria from before the king of Assyria."

13. When they had paid the tribute of their offerings and adoration, being warned in their sleep by an angel not to return to Herod, they returned into their own country another way, where, having been satisfied with the pleasures of religion, and taught by that rare demonstration, which was made by Christ, how man's happiness did nothing at all consist in the affluence of worldly possessions, or the tumors of honor; having seen the eternal Son of God poor and weak, and unclothed of all exterior ornaments; they renounced the world, and retired empty into the recesses of religion, and the delights of philosophy.

DEATH OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

BY BISHOP TAYLOR.

1. ALL this while Herod waited for the return of the wise men, that they might give directions where the child did lie, and his sword might find him out with a certain and direct execution. But “when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, he was exceeding wroth.” For it now began to deserve his trouble, when his purposes, which were most secret, began to be contradicted and diverted with a prevention, as if they were resisted by an all-seeing and almighty Providence. He began to suspect the hand of Heaven was in it, and saw there was nothing of his purposes to be acted, unless he could dissolve the golden chain of predestination. Herod believed the divine oracles, foretelling that a king should be born in Bethlehem; and yet his ambition had made him so stupid, that he attempted to cancel the decree of Heaven. For if he did not believe the prophecies, why was he troubled? If he did believe them, how

could he possibly hinder that event which God had foretold he would certainly bring to pass?

2. And therefore since God already had hindered him from the executions of a distinguishing sword, he resolved to send a sword of indiscrimination and confusion, hoping that if he killed all the babes in Bethlehem, the young king's reign also should soon terminate. "He therefore sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." For this execution was in the beginning of the second year after Christ's nativity, as in all probability we guess; not at the two years' end, as some suppose: because as his malice was subtle, so he intended it should be secure; and though he had been diligent in his inquiry, and was near the time in his computation, yet he that was never sparing of the lives of others, would now, to secure his kingdom, rather overact his severity for some months, than by doing execution but just to the title of his account, hazard the escaping of his Messiah.

3. This execution was sad, cruel, and universal: no abatements made for the dire shriekings of the mothers, no tender-hearted soldier was employed, no hard-hearted person was softened by the weeping eyes and pity-begging looks of those mothers, that wondered how it was possible any person should hurt their pretty sucklings; no connivances there, no protections, or friendships, or consideration, or indulgences; but Herod caused that his own child which was

at nurse in the coasts of Bethlehem should bleed to death: which made Augustus Cæsar to say, that "in Herod's house it were better to be a hog than a child;" because the custom of the nation did secure a hog from Herod's knife, but no religion could secure his child. The sword being thus made sharp by Herod's commission, killed fourteen thousand* pretty babes, as the Greeks in their calendar, and the Abyssinians of Ethiopia do commemorate in their offices of liturgy. For Herod, crafty and malicious, that is, perfectly tyrant, had caused all the children to be gathered together; which the credulous mothers (supposing it had been to take account of their age and number in order to some taxing) hindered not, but unwittingly suffered themselves and their babes to be betrayed to an irremediable butchery.

4. "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted." All the synonyma of sadness were little enough to express this great weeping, when fourteen thousand mothers in one day saw their pretty babes pouring forth their blood into that bosom whence not long before they had sucked milk, and instead of those pretty smiles which used to entertain the fancy and dear affections of their

* This number is traditional, but improbable. Not more so, however, than modern calculations. Michaelis reduces the number to twenty, and others to fifty. This is done, in order to proportion the children to the population of Bethlehem. But the massacre extended also "*to all the coasts thereof*"—ED.

mothers, nothing but affrighting shrieks, and then ghastly looks. The mourning was great, like "the mourning in the valley of Hinnom, and there was no comforter;" their sorrow was too big to be cured till it should lie down alone, and rest with its own weariness.

5. But the malice of Herod went also into the hill country, and hearing that of John the son of Zachary great things were spoken, by which he was designed to a great ministry about this young prince, he attempted in him also to rescind the prophecies, and sent a messenger of death towards him; but the mother's care had been early with him, and sent him into desert places, where he continued "till the time" appointed "of his manifestation unto Israel." But as the children of Bethlehem died in the place of Christ, so did the father of the Baptist die for his child. For Herod "slew Zachary between the temple and the altar," because he refused to betray his son to the fury of that rabid bear. Though some persons very eminent among the stars of the primitive church report a tradition, that a place being separated in the temple for virgins, Zachary suffered the mother of our Lord to abide there after the birth of her only Son, affirming her still to be a virgin; and that for this reason, not Herod, but the scribes and Pharisees did kill Zachary.

6. Tertullian reports, that the blood of Zachary had so besmeared the stones of the pavement, which was the altar on which the good old priest was sacrificed, that no art or industry could wash the tincture out, the dye and guilt being both indelible; as if, because God did intend to exact

of that nation "all the blood of righteous persons from Abel to Zacharias," who was the last of the martyrs of the synagogue, he would leave a character of their guilt in their eyes, to upbraid their irreligion, cruelty, and infidelity. Some there are who affirm these words of our blessed Saviour not to relate to any Zachary who had been already slain; but to be a prophecy of the last of all the martyrs of the Jews, who should be slain immediately before the destruction of the last temple and the dissolution of the nation. Certain it is, that such a Zachary, the son of Baruch, (if we may believe Josephus,) was slain in the middle of the temple a little before it was destroyed; and it is agreeable to the nature of the prophecy and reproof here made by our blessed Saviour, that "from Abel to Zachary" should take in "all the righteous blood" from first to last, till the iniquity was complete; and it is not imaginable that the blood of our blessed Lord and of St. James, their bishop, (for whose death many of themselves thought God destroyed their city,) should be left out of the account, which yet would certainly be left out, if any other Zachary should be meant than he whom they last slew: and in proportion to this, Cyprian de Valera expounds that which we read in the *past* tense, to signify the future, ye slew, i. e. shall slay; according to the style often used by prophets, and as the aorist of an uncertain signification will bear. But the first great instance of the divine vengeance for these executions was upon Herod, who in very few years after was smitten of God with so many plagues and tortures, that himself alone seemed like a hos-

pital of the incurables: for he was tormented with a soft slow fire, like that of burning iron or the cinders of yew, in his body; in his bowels with intolerable colics and ulcers, in his feet with gout, in his nerves with convulsions, difficulty of breathing; and out of divers parts of his body issued out so impure and ulcerous a steam, that the loathsomeness, pain, and indignation, made him once to snatch a knife with purpose to have killed himself, but that he was prevented by a nephew of his that stood there in attendance.

7. But as the flesh of beasts grows callous by stripes and the pressure of the yoke, so did the heart of Herod by the loads of divine vengeance. God began his hell here, and the pains of hell never made any man less impious: for Herod perceiving that he must now die, first put to death his son Antipater, under pretence that he would have poisoned him; and, that the last scene of his life might, for pure malice and exalted spite, outdo all the rest, because he believed the Jewish nation would rejoice at his death, he assembled all the nobles of the people, and put them in prison, giving in charge to his sister Salome, that, when he was expiring his last, all the nobility should be slain, that his death might be lamented with a perfect and universal sorrow.

8. But God that brings to nought the counsels of wicked princes, turned the design against the intendment of Herod; for when he was dead, and could not call his sister to account for disobeying his most bloody and unrighteous commands, she released all the imprisoned and despairing gentlemen,

and made the day of her brother's death a perfect jubilee, a day of joy, such as was that when the nation was delivered from the violence of Haman in the days of Purim.

9. And all this while God had provided a sanctuary for the holy child Jesus. For God seeing the secret purposes of blood which Herod had, sent his angel, "who appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. Then he arose, and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt." And they made their first abode in Hermopolis in the country of Thebais, whither when they first arrived, the child Jesus being by design of Providence carried into a temple, all the statues of the idol gods fell down, like Dagon at the presence of the ark, and suffered their timely and just dissolution and dishonor, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, the Lord shall come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence." And in the life of the prophet Jeremy, written by Epiphanius,* it is reported, "that he told the Egyptian priests, that then their idols should be broken in pieces, when a holy virgin with her child should enter into their country:" which prophecy possibly might be the cause that the Egyptians did, besides their

* There is, in Arabic, an Apocryphal gospel of the infancy: Dr. Clarke says, I have read this through, and have found it a piece of gross superstition, having nothing to entitle it to a shadow of credibility.—ED.

vanities, worship also an infant in a manger, and a virgin in her bed.

10. From Hermopolis to Maturea went these holy pilgrims in pursuance of their safety and provisions, where it was reported they dwelt in a garden of balsam, till Joseph being at the end of seven years (as it is commonly believed) ascertained by an angel of the death of Herod, and commanded to return to the land of Israel, was obedient to the heavenly vision, and returned. But hearing that Archelaus did reign in the place of his father, and knowing that the cruelty and ambition of Herod was hereditary or entailed upon Archelaus, being also warned to turn aside into the parts of Galilee, which was of a distinct jurisdiction, governed indeed by one of Herod's sons, but not by Archelaus, thither he diverted, and there that holy family remained in the city of Nazareth, whence the holy child had the appellation of a Nazarene.

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The Flight into Egypt.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DALE.

THE Star! the strange bright Star!
In the broad heavens it blazed alone,
And led the Sages of the East from far
To seek the King unknown!
The Star! the strange bright Star!
It track'd their path o'er deserts yet untrod
By foot of man—unseen, except of God.
At length it seem'd to rest—
Yet not on gilded dome or stately tower,
The home of royalty, the seat of power:
But o'er a rustic dwelling, mean and rude,
Alone amidst encircling solitude.
There, on the earth, in peasant garb array'd,
They found a youthful Mother, lowly laid;—
An Infant at her breast.

The Star! the strange bright Star!
 Hath it indeed unerring shone,
 To guide their devious footsteps from afar?
 Is this the King unknown?
 The Star! the strange bright Star!
 Swift as the lightning-flash, its lucid ray
 Shot from the heavens, and flood of sudden day
 Through the low dwelling pour'd;
 Then floated o'er the couch, and settled now,
 A wreath of glory, round the Infant's brow.
 The awe-struck sages knew the heavenly sign,
 And paid glad homage to the Babe divine;
 Then, Heaven-instructed, to their home afar
 Return'd, and inly bless'd the mystic Star
 Which led them to their Lord.

The Star! the strange bright Star!
 Where is it now?—The holy Child
 Is driven by Tyrant's hate to seek afar
 A home amidst the wild.
 The Star! the strange bright Star!
 Why gleams it not to gild the starless night,
 And guide the holy exiles in their flight?
 Nay, from the Infant's brow,
 On his fond mother's breast serenely laid,
 A stream of glory glistens through the shade.

He is himself the Star! the Star Divine!
Of Judah's seed, and David's kingly line!
By prophet-lips foretold; to mortals given,
A babe on earth, and yet the Lord of heaven.

Stern Tyrant, what art thou?

By thee to Egypt driven,
Oh, blind and frantic in thy wrath!
Thou dost but work the utter'd will of Heaven,
And track the Saviour's path.

The Star! the strange bright Star
No longer shines;—but to Jehovah's sight
Is not the darkness clear as noonday light?

By thee the Holy One
Fulfil his purpose. Thou hast drawn the sword:
'Tis but to prove how true the prophet's word
Of weeping Rachel. Thou hast spread the snare:
'Tis thine own foot that is entangled there.
To Egypt thou hast driven the Babe adored:
But, "Out of Egypt," saith the living Lord,
"I call my Saviour-Son!"

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

BY THE REV. HENRY BLUNT, A. M.

THE next incident in the infant history of our Lord after his circumcision, to which the evangelist calls our attention, is his "presentation in the temple."—"they brought him to Jerusalem," says St. Luke, "to present him to the Lord." This was again an act of obedience to the ceremonial ritual of the Jews. I need scarcely remind you that the custom originated in an express command of God, when he preserved the children of Israel, but slew all the first-born of Egypt. At that most remarkable instance of the Divine interference, God declared, "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast: it is mine." "And all the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem." In pursuance of this command, the parents of the infant Jesus brought him, when he was forty days old, to the temple, probably to redeem him by offering in his stead

the sum of money, five shekels, required by the law, but certainly to "present him to the Lord." The first act, then, which his parents performed for the infant Jesus, was this,—*they presented him to the Lord.* Many are the Christian parents whom I am now addressing: many who delight, far above all other gifts with which the Lord has blessed them, in the thought of those young heirs of immortality who are so especially commended to their regards, and intrusted to their guardianship. May I not, then, venture to ask all such, Have you imitated the example of this holy pair, by presenting your little ones as a free-will offering to the Lord? How beautiful to the Christian mind is the picture of a mother receiving for the first time her babe into her arms, and while pressing it to her bosom, and raising a silent thanksgiving to him who gave it, freely presenting it to the Lord, giving it back again to the Author of all her mercies, and declaring, from the very ground of her heart, that, as her first and dearest petition, she asks for it neither health, nor fortune, nor power, nor fame, but a portion in the love of God and a place in his kingdom! I trust there are many among you in all ranks, who have realized these Christian feelings, and have already had reason to believe, by the opening indications of divine grace visible in the first dawns of your children's minds, that your offering has been accepted. Some of you, perhaps, there are, who have seen even more than this, who have lived to see the Lord, to whom you presented your offspring, prepare by the more than ordinary outpourings of his Spirit, their young hearts

for the enjoyment of himself, and you have mourned over their early grave, where you should, perhaps, rather have exulted over their early blessedness, and have praised God that some of the best and dearest have been removed from the coming evil, and safely housed before the tempest has set in. And are there not a few who in all sincerity and devotedness of heart have presented your children to the Lord, and yet are called to exercise much faith and patience while awaiting his decision, who see no signs of early grace, no evidences that he has condescended to accept your offering? Christian parents, be of good courage, continue to bear your children upon your heart before the Lord; he will not disdain a mother's offering, he will not despise a mother's prayer. You may never yet have had reason to know that your offering has been accepted; but if you are conscious that it has been sincerely, and faithfully, and heartily made, there is every encouragement which revelation and experience can supply, to lead you to believe that your Father will yet be their Father, and your God their God.

It was while Joseph and Mary were in the temple, presenting their first-born to the Lord, and making the accustomed offering for the mother's purification, that one of those strikingly touching incidents, which so often adorn the gospel history, took place. An aged man of God, who had long been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and whose footsteps even now lingered upon the brink of eternity, entered the temple. He had been living for many years in a humble dependence upon an express revelation from God, "that

he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." That long-expected day had now arrived; and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he was led to enter the house of God at the very hour when the great prophecy of Malachi, concerning "the glory" of this "latter house"—"The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple"—was fulfilling. How inexpressible must have been the feelings of this aged saint, when the Holy Ghost revealed to him his incarnate Saviour, "the Lord's Christ,"—in the person of the babe of Bethlehem! If, like many among his brethren, he had been expecting a temporal kingdom, and a Messiah from among the great ones of the world, what would have been his disappointment at the sight of this poverty-stricken couple and their helpless infant! Yet nothing doubting, the old man received the child in his arms, and blessing God for a mercy of which he felt himself undeserving, burst forth into that hymn of praise which has since been, in all ages, the delight and solace of the church, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." While at the same instant, Anna, a prophetess, a widow of fourscore and four years, coming in, and hearing Simeon thus declaring by Divine revelation the dignity and glory of the holy child Jesus, united her praises also to the God of their salvation, that the prayers of Israel were answered, and the long-looked-for redemption of Israel was achieved.

How great an honor did the Almighty here put upon these aged saints, that, of all the dwellers in Jerusalem, of

all the worshippers in that temple, they, and they alone, should be selected for this first interview with the Lord of the temple! There were many wise, many learned, at that time in Jerusalem, some even of those who often trod the courts of the temple, and who had well read and understood the prophecies of the Messiah; for we shortly afterwards find that they were able with great accuracy to inform Herod where the Christ should be born; and yet no one of these was led to the temple upon that day and hour, to behold the infant Jesus, and participate in the joy of which Simeon and Anna were partakers! And why, speaking after the fashion of men, why did God select this humble pair for this high honor? Surely it was because they were pre-eminent among those who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel;" whose prayers, and thoughts, and affections, were continually going forth to meet the coming Saviour, who acted up to the degree of light which God had vouchsafed to them, and prayed fervently, and sought diligently, and waited patiently for more. Therefore were they guided to the temple on that auspicious day, and on that happy hour.

THE YOUTH OF OUR SAVIOUR.

BY BISHOP TAYLOR.

1. FROM the return of this holy family to Judea, and their habitation to Nazareth, till the blessed child Jesus was twelve years of age, we have nothing transmitted to us out of any authentic record, but that they went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. "And when Jesus was twelve years old," and was in the holy city, attending upon the paschal rites and solemn sacrifices of the law, his parents, "having fulfilled the days of their festivity, went homeward, supposing the child had been in the caravan among his friends, and so they erred for the space of a whole day's journey; and when they sought him, and found him not, they returned to Jerusalem full of fears and sorrow."

2. No fancy can imagine the doubt, the apprehensions, the possibilities of mischief, and the tremblings of heart, which the holy virgin-mother felt thronging about her fancy

and understanding, but such a person who hath been tempted to the danger of a violent fear and transportation, by apprehension of the loss of a hope greater than a miracle; her discourses with herself could have nothing of distrust, but much of sadness and wonder, and the indetermination of her thoughts was a trouble great as the passion of her love: "possibly an angel might have carried him she knew not whither; or it may be the son of Herod had gotten the prey which his cruel father missed; or he was sick, or detained out of curiosity and wonder, or any thing but what was right." And by this time she was come to Jerusalem, and having spent three days in her sad and holy pursuit of her lost jewel, despairing of the prosperous event of any human diligence, as in all other cases she had accustomed, she made her address to God, and entering the temple to pray, God, that knew her desires, prevented her with the blessings of goodness, and there her sorrow was changed into joy and wonder; for there she found her holy Son "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions."

3. "And when they saw him, they were amazed, and so were all that heard him, at his understanding and answers;" beyond his education, beyond his experience, beyond his years, and even beyond the common spirits of the best men, discoursing up to the height of a prophet, with the clearness of an angel, and the infallibility of inspiration: for here it was verified in the highest and most literal signification, that "out of the mouth of babes God hath ordained strength;"

but this was the strength of argument, and science of the highest mysteries of religion and secret philosophy.

4. Glad were the parents of the child to find him illustrated with a miracle, concerning which when he had given them such an account that "they understood not," but yet "Mary laid up in her heart," as that this was part of his employment and "his Father's business, he returned with them to Nazareth, and was subject to his parents;" where he lived in all holiness and humility, showing great signs of wisdom, endearing himself to all that beheld his conversation, did nothing less than might become the great expectation which his miraculous birth had created of him; for "he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," still growing in proportion to his great beginnings to a miraculous excellency of grace, sweetness of demeanor, and excellency of understanding.

5. They that love to serve God in hard questions, use to dispute whether Christ did truly or in appearance only increase in wisdom. For being personally united to the Word, and being the eternal wisdom of the Father, it seemed to them, that a plenitude of wisdom was as natural to the whole person as to the divine nature. But others, fixing their belief upon the words of the story, which equally affirms Christ as properly to have "increased in favor with God as with man, in wisdom as in stature," they apprehend no inconvenience in affirming it to belong to the verity of human nature, to have degrees of understanding as well as of other perfections; and although the humanity of Christ

made up the same person with the divinity, yet they think the divinity still to be free, even in those communications which were imparted to his inferior nature, and the Godhead might as well suspend the emanation of all the treasures of wisdom upon the humanity for a time, as he did the beatifical vision, which most certainly was not imparted in the interval of his sad and dolorous passion. But whether it were truly or in appearance, in habit, or in exercise of act, by increase of notion or experience, it is certain the promotions of the holy child were great, admirable, and as full of wonder as of sanctity, and sufficient to entertain the hopes and expectations of Israel with preparations and dispositions, as to satisfy their wonder for the present, so to accept him at the time of his publication, they having no reason to be scandalized at the smallness, improbability, and indifferency of his first beginnings.

6. But the holy child had also an employment which he undertook in obedience to his supposed father, for exercise and example of humility, and for the support of that holy family which was dear in the eyes of God, but not very splendid by the opulency of a free and indulgent fortune. He wrought in the trade of a carpenter, and when Joseph died, which happened before the manifestation of Jesus unto Israel, he wrought alone, and was no more called the carpenter's son, but the carpenter himself. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" said his offended countrymen. And in this condition the blessed Jesus did abide till he was thirty years old; for he that came to fulfil the

law would not suffer one tittle of it to pass unaccomplished; for by the law of the nation and custom of the religion no priest was to officiate, or prophet was to preach, before he was thirty years of age.

JESUS DISPUTING WITH THE DOCTORS.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DALE.

WHERE, Wisdom, is thy dwelling-place—thy home,
Oh Understanding ! where ?
Is it beneath wide ocean's breast of foam,
With pearls and coral rare ;
Or in the trackless mine,
Or on some cloud-capped Alp, by man untrod ?—
The home of Understanding is divine,
And Wisdom dwells with God !

Ask of the deep—the deep will roar reply ;
Ask of the swelling sea ;
Ask of th' eternal hills that cleave the sky—
Each answers, “ Not in me !
Oh not to me 'tis given



Jesus disputing with the Doctors.

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To be the viewless Godhead's visible shrine ;
The home of Understanding is in heaven,
And wisdom is divine !”

Then hast thou, Wisdom, never walked on earth,
Nor trod the subject sea,
Nor found, in breast of one of mortal birth,
A temple worthy Thee ?
Yes ; Wisdom once hath blest
The world, and once the conscious sea hath trod,—
For once there dwelt within the human breast
The fullness of the God !

Yet not with student pale, or lettered sage,
Nor in the lonely cell
Of grave recluse, or haunts of sober age,
Did heavenly Wisdom dwell :
Pure infancy, 'twas thine !
'Twas thine, sweet childhood ! thine, ingenuous youth !
To be the temple of the Word divine,
The Life, the Light, the Truth.

From infancy to youth, from youth to man,
Th' incarnate Godhead past ;
Perfect through every stage of life's brief span,
And perfect to the last.

How on the heavenly Child
 The Virgin mother gazed, no heart can tell—
 No mother's babe on earth so sweetly smiled—
 None could be loved so well.

Scarce had twelve summers sunned Him, when He sate
 Within the temple court ;
 Around Him doctors came and scribes sedate,
 And priests of solemn port :
 They asked Him of the law
 Things deep, mysterious, dark—but in that hour
 Their cavils were exchanged for conscious awe—
 His answers were with power !

Next was His turn to question—as He spoke
 In vain they sought reply ;
 From some the words of admiration broke ;
 Some scowled with evil eye ;
 Upon the Holy Child
 Some gazed, as He had been an Angel fair :
 Oh knew ye not Messiah when He smiled ?
 'Tis more than Angel there !

So when at length broke up the grave divan
 “What youth is this,” they said—
 “In years a child, in wisdom more than man ?”—
 But one the riddle read.

“To us the Child is given,
The Virgin’s son, the promised Heavenly Birth—
And Wisdom hath but left her home in heaven
To dwell with God on earth.”

BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

BY BISHOP TAYLOR.

Now that the full time was come, Jesus took leave of his mother and his trade, to begin his Father's work and the office prophetic, in order to the redemption of the world; and when "John was baptizing in Jordan, Jesus came to John to be baptized of him." The Baptist had never seen his face, because they had been from their infancy driven to several places, designed to several employments, and never met till now. But immediately the Holy Ghost inspired St. John with a discerning and knowing spirit, and at his first arrival he knew him, and did him worship. And when Jesus desired to be baptized, John forbade him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" For the baptism of John, although it was not a direct instrument of the Spirit for the collation of grace, neither find we it administered in any form of words, not so much as in the name of Christ to come (as many

dream), because even after John had baptized, the Pharisees still doubted if he were the Messiah, which they would not, if in his form of ministration he had published Christ to come after him; and also because it had not been proper for Christ himself to have received that baptism whose form had specified himself to come hereafter; neither could it consist with the revelation which John had, and the confession which he made, to baptize in the name of Christ to come, whom the Spirit marked out to him to be come already (and himself pointed at him with his finger), yet it was a ceremonious consignation of the doctrine of repentance, which was one great part of the covenant evangelical, and was a divine institution, the susception of it was in order to the "fulfilling all righteousness," it was a sign of humility, the persons baptized confessed their sins, it was a sacramental disposing to the baptism and faith of Christ; but therefore John wondered why the Messiah, "the Lamb of God," pure and without spot, who needed not the abster-sions of repentance or the washings of baptism, should demand it, and of him a sinner and his servant. And in the Hebrew gospel of St. Matthew which the Nazarenes used at Berea (as St. Hierom reports) these words are added; ["the mother of the Lord and his brethren said unto him, John the Baptist baptizeth to the remission of sins, let us go and be baptized of him. He said to them, What have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized of him?"] And this part of the story is also told by Justin Martyr. But Jesus wanted not a proposition, to consign by his baptism,

proportionable enough to the analogy of its institution ; for as others professed their *return* towards innocence, so he avowed his *perseverance* in it: and though he was never called in Scripture a sinner, yet he was made sin for us ; that is, he did undergo the shame and the punishment ; and therefore it was proper enough for him to perform the sacrament of sinners.

2. But the holy Jesus, who came (as himself in answer to the Baptist's question professed) "to fulfil all righteousness," would receive that rite which his Father had instituted in order to the manifestation of his Son. For although the Baptist had a glimpse of him by the first irradiations of the Spirit, yet John professed, that he therefore came "baptizing with water," that "Jesus might be manifested to Israel:" and it was also a sign given to the Baptist himself, that "on whomsoever he saw the Spirit descending and remaining," he is the person "that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." And God chose to actuate the sign at the waters of Jordan, in great and religious assemblies convened there at John's baptism ; and therefore Jesus came to be baptized, and by this baptism became known to John, who, as before he gave to him an unqualified testimony, so now he pointed out the person in his sermons and discourses, and by calling him "the Lamb of God" prophesied of his passion, and preached him to be the world's Redeemer, and the sacrifice for mankind. He was now manifest to Israel, he confirmed the baptism of John, he sanctified the water to become sacramental and ministerial in the remission of sins, he by a real

event declared, that to them who should rightly be baptized the kingdom of heaven should certainly be opened, he inserted himself by that ceremony into the society and participation of holy people, of which communion himself was head and prince; and he did, in a symbol, purify human nature, whose stains and guilt he had undertaken.

As soon as John had performed his ministry, and "Jesus was baptized, he prayed, and the heavens were opened," and the air clarified by a new and glorious light, "and the Holy Ghost in the manner of a dove alighted upon" his sacred head, and God the Father gave "a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was the inauguration and proclamation of the Messiah, when he began to be the great prophet of the new covenant. And this was the greatest meeting that ever was upon earth, where the whole cabinet of the mysterious Trinity was opened and shown, as much as the capacities of our present imperfections will permit; the second person in the veil of humanity, the third in the shape or with the motion of a dove: but the first kept his primitive state, and, as to the Israelites, he gave notice by the way of caution, "Ye saw no shape, but ye heard a voice," so now also God the Father gave testimony to his holy Son, and appeared only in a voice without any visible representment.

When the rite and the solemnity were over, "Christ ascended up out of the waters," and left so much virtue behind him, that, as Gregorius Turonensis reports, the creek of

the river where his holy body had been baptized was endued with a healing quality, and a power of curing lepers that bathed themselves in those waters, in the faith and with invocation of the holy name of Jesus. But the manifestation of this power was not till afterwards, for as yet Jesus did no miracles.

As soon as ever the Saviour of the world was baptized, and had opened the heavens, which yet never had been opened to man, and was declared the Son of God, "Jesus was by the Spirit driven into the wilderness," not by an unnatural violence, but by the efficacies of inspiration, and a supernatural inclination and activity of resolution; for it was the Holy Spirit that bare him thither; he "was led by the *good* Spirit to be tempted by the *evil*:" whither also he was pleased to retire, to make demonstration that even in an active life, such as he was designed to and intended, some recesses and temporary dismissions of the world are most expedient, for such persons especially whose office is prophetic, and for institution of others, that by such privacies in prayer and contemplation they may be better enabled to teach others, when they have in such retirements conversed with God.

In the desert, which was four miles from the place of his baptism, and about twenty miles from Jerusalem, as the common computations are, he did abide "forty days and forty nights," where he was perpetually disturbed and assaulted with evil spirits, in the midst of wild beasts, in a

continual fast, without eating bread or drinking water; "and the angels ministered to him," being messengers of comfort and sustentation sent from his Father for the support and service of his humanity, and employed in resisting and discountenancing the assaults and temporal hostilities of the spirits of darkness.

Whether the devils appeared in any horrid and affrighting shapes is not certain; but it is more likely, to a person of so great sanctity and high designation, they would appear more angelical and immaterial, in representations intellectual, in words and *ideas*, temptations and enticements, because Jesus was not a person of those low weaknesses to be affrighted or troubled with an ugly phantasm, which can do nothing but abuse the weak and imperfect conceptions of persons nothing extraordinary. And this was the way which Satan, or the prince of the devils, took, whose temptations were reserved for the last assault, and the great day of trial; for at the expiration of his forty days, Jesus being hungry, the tempter invited him only to eat bread of his own providing, which might refresh his humanity and prove his divinity, hoping that his hunger, and the desire of convincing the devil, might tempt him to eat before the time appointed. But Jesus answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God;" meaning, that in every word of God, whether the commandment be general or special, a promise is either expressed or implied of the supply of all provisions

necessary for him that is doing the work of God ; and that was the present case of Jesus, who was then doing his Father's work, and promoting our interest, and therefore was sure to be provided for ; and therefore so are we.

The devil, having failed in this assault, tries him again, requiring but a demonstration of his being the Son of God. He "sets him upon the battlement of the temple," and invites him to "throw himself down," upon a pretence that God "would send his angels" to keep his Son ; and quotes Scripture for it. But Jesus understood it well ; and though he was secured of God's protection, yet he would not tempt God, nor solicit his providence to a dereliction, by tempting him to an unnecessary conservation. This assault was silly and weak. But at last he unites all his power of stratagem, and places the holy Jesus "upon an exceeding high mountain," and by an angelical power draws into one centre species and *ideas* from all the kingdoms and glories of the world, and makes an admirable map of beauties, and represents it to the eyes of Jesus, saying, that all that was put into his power to give, and he "would give it him, if he would fall down and worship him." But then the holy Lamb was angry as a provoked lion, and commanded him away, when his temptations were violent, and his demands impudent and blasphemous. "Then the devil leaveth him, and the angels came and ministered unto him," bringing such things as his necessities required, after he had by a forty days' fast done penance for our sins, and consigned to

his church the doctrine and discipline of fasting in order to a contemplative life, and the resisting and overcoming all the temptations and allurements of the devil, and all our ghostly enemies.

JESUS BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DALE.

A Legend of the Early Martyrs.

“ OH! let me bear my orphan child
“ From faithless friends, and ruthless foes,
“ And far within the trackless wild
“ Seek solitude, though not repose.
“ A fountain 'mid the desert flows,
“ By heaven unseal'd to Hagar's view ;
“ And still the God of Abraham knows
“ The outcast wretch—and pities too.
“ There thou, my child! last hope of Israel's daughter,
“ Shall drink, like Ishmael, of that living water ;
“ When thy fond mother's latest word is spoken,
“ The hand that tends thee—cold, the heart that loves
thee—broken.”



Jesus Blessing Little Children

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She went—the lone, the desolate—
Her babe, her orphan at her breast;
But in the gate a Stranger sate,
Whose glance her frantic speed repress'd.
Hath He her secret purpose guess'd?
Hath He explored her heart's despair?
For all are mute, as if confess'd
A minister of heaven is there.

On Him with silent reverence Age is gazing,
And Youth to Him the timid eye upraising;
And 'mid the throng behold one happy mother
Bea'ring her smiling babe—another—and another.

A change came o'er the mourner's breast;
A light amidst her darkness sprung;
And through the circling crowd she press'd,
And on the Stranger's robe she hung.
She pointed to her babe—the tongue
Refused its office; but the pray'r
Whose wild unutter'd accents rung
Through heart and brain was vocal there.

With harsh rebuke the zealous train repell'd her,
But He, their Lord, with looks of love beheld her;
They judg'd, as men, from men their griefs concealing,
He spake as One to whom full hearts need no revealing.

" Forbid them not—forbid them not—
 " The little ones—to come to Me ;
 " They are not of their God forgot,
 " And should they here forgotten be ?
 " In Heaven their Angels always see
 " Unveil'd, my Father's face benign ;
 " And only such, from guile as free,
 " Shall win that dwelling-place divine.
 " Thou too ! sad mother ! let not grief oppress thee,
 " Thy child—thy orphan child—shall live to bless thee ;
 " Shall be thy joy in health, thy hope in sorrow,
 " And share at last with thee the day that knows no
 morrow."

And fourscore years have roll'd away—
 Wave following wave on life's wide sea ;
 Apostles, martyrs, where are they ?
 And he, the bless'd in infancy—
 The chosen child, O where is he ?
 Long since in still and dreamless rest
 Hath slept his happy Mother—free
 From all that wrung her living breast :
 But he is—where ? Hath yet the bright palm crown'd him ?
 Is the pure robe of victory wrapp'd around him ?
 Or doth he traverse still this vale of sorrow ?
 Waiting the promised day—the day that hath no morrow ?

Across the dark blue sea I gaze ;
 I gaze on thee, Imperial Rome !
 What myriads throng thy peopled ways ?
 What deeds of blood are yet to come ?
 Doth some bold captive meet his doom,
 Who in barbaric clime withstood
 Thy pride, and now o'er ocean's foam
 Is brought, to glut thy thirst for blood ?

Oh, no ! too well the fatal cause revealing,
 In yon dim cell a little band is kneeling ;
 And one is there, on whom with speechless sorrow
 Each heart and eye is fix'd—for He must die to-morrow !

Yet, 'mid the pale sad train who keep
 Their melancholy vigil there,
 His eye alone forbears to weep,
 His heart alone is nerved to bear.
 Still seems that saintly brow to wear
 Its wonted look of mild repose ;
 And though his hands were raised in pray'r,
 Yet not for life that prayer arose.

“ I come, my Lord ! I come. Thy hand is o'er me,

“ E'en while the gates of death unclosed before me ;

“ Thine, O my God, is still the life thou gavest,

“ And thine, Redeemer ! still the guilty soul thou savest !”

It came—it passed. From that dark cell
The Martyr to his death they bore;
Deep horror on the gazers fell;
They heard a rush—a madd'ning roar—
A crashing sound—and all was o'er:
The sated monster sought his den.
Then was the Everlasting Door
Unclosed, and heavenly harpings then
Hail'd the great work fulfill'd—"Immortal Spirit,
Thy crown receive, thy promised rest inherit;
Thine earthly path has led through storm and sorrow,
But thine is now the day that knows nor night nor
morrow!"

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Our Lord healing the Sick.

PREACHING AND MIRACLES OF OUR LORD.

BY BISHOP TAYLOR.

AND now Jesus left Nazareth, and came to Capernaum,* a maritime town of great resort; choosing that for his scene of preaching, and his place of dwelling. For now the time was fulfilled, the office of the Baptist was expired, and the kingdom of God was at hand. He, therefore, preached the sum of the gospel, faith and repentance; "repent ye and believe the gospel." And what that gospel was, the sum and series of all his sermons afterwards did declare.

The work was now grown high and pregnant, and Jesus saw it convenient to choose disciples to his ministry and service in the work of preaching, and to be "witnesses of all that he should say, do, or teach" for ends which were afterwards made public and excellent. Jesus, therefore, "as he

* So completely was Capernaum cast down to Hades, for impenitence under the ministry and miracles of Christ, that no trace of it, nor of Chorazin and Bethsaida, is now to be found.

walked by the sea of Galilee," called Simon and Andrew, who knew him before by the preaching of John, and now "left all, their ship, and their net, and followed him. And when he was gone a little further, he calls the two sons of Zebedee, James and John; and they went after him." And with this family he goes up and down the whole of Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing all manner of diseases, curing demoniacs, cleansing lepers, and giving strength to paralytics and lame people.

But when "the people pressed on him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret," and presently "entering into Simon's ship," commanded him "to launch into the deep, and from thence he taught the people," and there wrought a miracle; for, being Lord of the creatures, he commanded the fishes of the sea, and they obeyed. For when Simon, who had "fished all night in vain, let down his net at the command of Jesus, he inclosed so great a multitude of fishes, that the net brake," and the fishermen "were amazed" and fearful at so prodigious "a draught." But beyond the miracle it was intended, that a representation should be made of the plenitude of the catholic Church, and multitudes of believers who should be taken by Simon and the rest of the disciples, whom by that miracle he consigned to become "fishers of men;" who by their artifices of prudence and holy doctrine might gain souls to God, that when the net should be drawn to shore, and separation made by the angels, they and their disciples might be distinguished from the reprobate portion.

But the light of the sun uses not to be confined to a province or a kingdom; so great a prophet, and so divine a physician, and such miracles, created a fame loud as thunder, but not so full of sadness and presage. Immediately the "fame of Jesus went into all Syria, and there came to him multitudes from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea." And all that had any "sick with divers diseases brought them to him," and he laid his hands on every one of them, "and healed them." And when he cured the "lunatics and persons possessed with evil spirits," the devils cried out and confessed him to be "Christ the Son of God;" but "he suffered them not," choosing rather to work faith in the persuasions of his disciples by moral arguments and the placid demonstrations of the Spirit, that there might in faith be an excellency in proportion to the choice, and that it might not be made violent by the conviction and forced testimonies of accursed and unwilling spirits.

But when Jesus saw his assembly was grown full, and his audience numerous, he "went up into a mountain," and when his disciples came unto him, he made that admirable sermon, called "the sermon upon the mount;" which is a divine repository of such excellent truths and mysterious dictates of secret theology, that it contains a breviary of all those precepts which integrate the morality of Christian religion: pressing the moral precepts given by Moses, and enlarging their obligation by a stricter sense and more severe exposition; that their righteousness might "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees;" preaches

perfection, and the doctrines of meekness, poverty of spirit, Christian mourning, desire of holy things, mercy and purity, peace and toleration of injuries; affixing a special promise of blessing to be the guerdon and inheritance of those graces and spiritual excellences. He explicates some part of the decalogue, and adds appendixes and precepts of his own. He teaches his disciples to pray, how to fast, how to give alms, contempt of the world, not to judge others, forgiving injuries, an indifferency and incuriousness of temporal provisions, and a seeking of the kingdom of God and its appendant righteousness.

When Jesus had finished his sermon, and descended from the mountain, a poor leprous person came and worshipped, and begged to be cleansed; which Jesus soon granted, engaging him not to publish it where he should go abroad, but sending him to the priest to offer an oblation according to the rites of Moses' law; and then came directly to Capernaum, and "taught in their synagogues upon the Sabbath days." Where, in his sermons, he expressed the dignity of a prophet, and the authority of a person sent from God, not inviting the people by the soft arguments and insinuations of scribes and Pharisees, but by demonstrations and issues of divinity. There he cures a demoniac in one of their synagogues, and by and by, after going abroad, he heals Peter's wife's mother of a fever; insomuch that he grew the talk of all men and their wonder, till they flocked so to him to see him, to hear him, to satisfy their curiosity and their needs, that after he had healed those multitudes

which beset the house of Simon, where he cured his mother of the fever, he retired himself into a desert place very early in the morning, that he might have an opportunity to pray, free from the oppressions and noises of the multitude.

But neither so could he be hid, but, like a light shining by the fringes of a curtain, he was soon discovered in his solitude; for the multitude found him out, imprisoning him in their circles and undeniable attendances. But Jesus told them plainly, he must "preach the gospel to other cities also," and therefore resolved to pass to the other side of the lake of Gennesaret, so to quit the throng. Whither, as he was going, a scribe offered himself a disciple to his institution; till Jesus told him that his own condition was worse than "foxes and birds," for whom a habitation is provided, but none for him, no, "not a place where to lay his head" and find rest. And what became of this forward professor afterwards we find not. Others that were probationers of this fellowship, Jesus bound to a speedy profession, not suffering one to go home to bid his friends farewell, nor another so much as to "bury his dead."

By the time Jesus got to the ship it was late, and being heavy to "sleep, rested on a pillow," and slept as soundly as weariness, meekness, and innocence could make him; insomuch that "a violent storm," the chiding of the winds and waters, could not awake him; till the ship being almost covered with broken billows and the impetuous dashings of the waters, the men already sunk in their spirits, and the ship like enough to sink too, the disciples awakened him,

and called for help, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus arising reproved their infidelity, commanded the wind to be still and the seas peaceable, and immediately "there was a great calm;" and they presently arrived in the land of the Gergesenes or Gerasenes.

In the land of the Gergesites, or Gergesenes, which was the remaining name of an extinct people, being one of the nations whom the sons of Jacob drove from their inheritance, there were two cities; Gadara, from the tribe of Gad, to whom it fell by lot in the division of the land, (which, having been destroyed by the Jews, was rebuilt by Pompey at the request of Demetrius Gadarenses, Pompey's freedman,) and near it was the Gersad, as Josephus reports: which diversity of towns and names is the cause of the various recitation of this story by the evangelists. Near this city of Gadara there were many sepulchres in the hollownesses of rocks, where the dead were buried, and where many superstitious persons used Memphitic and Thessalic rites, invoking evil spirits; insomuch that at the instant of our Saviour's arrival in the country "there met him two possessed with devils from these tombs, exceeding fierce," and so had been long, "insomuch that no man dare pass that way."

Jesus commanded the devils out of the possessed persons; but there were certain men feeding swine, which, though extremely abominated by the Jewish religion, yet for the use of the Roman armies and quarterings of soldiers they were permitted, and divers privileges granted to the masters of such herds; and because Gadara was a city, and

the company mingled of Greeks, Syrians, and Jews, these last, in all likelihood, not making the greatest number; the devils, therefore, besought Jesus, that he would not send them into the abyss, but "permit them to enter into the swine." He gave them leave; "and the swine ran violently down a steep place into the" hot baths, which were at the foot of the hill on which Gadara was built, (which smaller congregation of waters the Jews used to call "sea,") or else, as others think, into the lake of Gennesaret, "and perished in the waters." But this accident so troubled the inhabitants, that they came and "entreated Jesus to depart out of their coasts." And he did so; for leaving "Galilee of the Gentiles," he came to the lesser Galilee, and so again to the city of Capernaum.

But when he was come thither, he was met by divers scribes and Pharisees, who came from Jerusalem, and "doctors of the law" from Galilee; and while they were sitting in a house, which was encompassed with multitudes, that no business or necessity could be admitted to the door, a poor paralytic was brought to be cured, and they were fain to "uncover the tiles of the house, and let him down in his bed with cords in the midst," before Jesus sitting in conference with the doctors. "When Jesus saw their faith, he said, Man, thy sins be forgiven thee." At which saying the Pharisees being troubled, thinking it to be blasphemy, and that "none but God could forgive sins," Jesus was put to verify his absolution; which he did in a just satisfaction and proportion to their understandings. For the Jews did

believe that all afflictions were punishments for sin; "who sinned, this man or his father, that he was born blind?" and that removing of the punishment was forgiving of the sin. And therefore, Jesus, to prove that his sins were forgiven, removed that which they supposed to be the effect of his sin, and by curing the palsy prevented their further murmur about the pardon. "That ye might know the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) arise, take up thy bed and walk. And the man arose, was healed, and glorified God."

A while after Jesus went again towards the sea, and on his way, seeing Matthew the publican "sitting at the receipt of custom," he bade him follow him. Matthew first seated Jesus, and then became his disciple. But the Pharisees that were with him began to be troubled that he "ate with publicans and sinners." For the office of the publican, though among the Romans it was honest and of great account, and "the flower of the Roman knights, the ornament of the city, the security of the commonwealth, were accounted to consist in the society of publicans;" yet among both the Jews and Greeks the name was odious, and the persons were accursed; not only because they were strangers that were the *chief* of them, who took to them some of the nation where they were employed, but because the Jews especially stood upon the charter of their nation and the privilege of their religion, that none of them should pay tribute; and also because they exercised great injustices and oppressions, having a power unlimited, and a covetous-

ness wide as hell, and greedy as the fire or grave. But Jesus gave so fair an account concerning his converse with these persons, that the objection turned to be his apology : for he conversed with them because they were sinners ; and it was as if a physician should be reprov'd for having so much to do with *sick* persons ; for therefore was he “sent, not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance,” to advance the reputation of mercy above the rites of sacrifice.

But as the little bubblings and gentle murmurs of the water are presages of a storm, and are more troublesome in their prediction than their violence, so were the arguings of the Pharisees symptoms of a secret displeasure and an ensuing war ; though at first represented in the civilities of question and scholastical discourses, yet they did but fore-run vigorous objections and bold calumnies, which were the fruits of next summer. But as yet they discoursed fairly, asking him “why John’s disciples fasted often, but the disciples of Jesus did not fast.” Jesus told them it was because these were the days in which the bridegroom was come in person to espouse the Church unto himself ; and, therefore, for “the children of the bride-chamber to fast” then, was like bringing a dead corpse to the joys of a bride or the pomps of coronation ; “the days should come that the bridegroom should retire” into his chamber and draw the curtains, “and then they should fast in those days.”

THE HEALING OF THE IMPOTENT MAN.

BY REV. HENRY BLUNT, A. M.

THE inspired historian, having mentioned the presence of our Lord in Jerusalem; at a particular season, and the motive which brought him thither, saying, "There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem," thus proceeds to describe the place, and the circumstances of the miracle of the text.

"Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches." It is the opinion of Dr. Lightfoot, that this pool had been used as a bath for persons under ceremonial defilement, and that the five porches were covered with walks, or porticoes, built for their convenience. "In these" porches "lay a multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the waters. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the wa-

ter; whosoever then, first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole, of whatsoever disease he had."

It is needless to detain you upon the many conjectures which learned writers have ventured upon this passage of Scripture, rather than believe the plain and simple statement of the word of God itself; the manner in which one accounts for the medicinal virtues of the pool, by supposing it to have been a mineral spring; another by imagining that the entrails of the sheep, slain for sacrifice, were cast into it, and that the angel was only a messenger from the Sanhedrim, sent at certain hours to stir up the water, which had acquired, in a manner they do not attempt to explain, some most powerful healing properties. It is enough for the simple reader of Holy Writ, that, however contrary it may appear to human experience, the unerring word assures him, it was the will of God, that at particular seasons, the waters of this pool should be possessed of certain miraculous properties, communicated, as it appears, by a messenger from on high; and that the first, and only the first person who then stepped into them, was invariably healed. Since these wonderful properties are mentioned by no uninspired writers, it seems probable that they were communicated to this pool but a short time before the ministry of our Lord commenced, and were removed when that ministry concluded. However this may be, it is certain that at the period of the incident before us, they existed, and that the sight of the many suffering children of affliction, lying in these porticoes, in the daily and hourly expectation of a blessing which only one

could enjoy, must have strongly affected the heart of our Redeemer. Whether the pool lay near the temple, as some imagine, the history does not recount; but one thing it manifests, which in a suffering world should never be forgotten, that let the sick and miserable be where they may, they cannot be out of the thoughts, or out of the sight, or out of the path of our Divine Master. His first object at Jerusalem seems to have been, to visit the "blind, halt, withered," who lay at the pool of Bethesda, uncared for and unthought of, perhaps, by any other human being in those vast multitudes, who assembled at the Passover, except the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Surely there is comfort in the thought, even to the most wretched and most desolate upon earth. The Saviour who passed by the palaces of princes, sought out the porches of Bethesda. That lodging cannot be too poor and miserable for the Saviour's presence, which contains one suffering sinner. He who himself had not where to lay his head, will seek and visit you in the lowest abode of penury, if you will but acknowledge your need of him, and welcome his approach.

"And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." How long and how grievous a visitation, is the first comment which we are all disposed to make upon this portion of the history! far different was the remark of the holy men of old, the pious and devoted, but as to his bodily frame, infirm and suffering, Richard Baxter; he says in his note upon this verse, "How great a mercy was it, to live thirty-eight years under God's wholesome dis-

cipline! O my God, I thank thee for the like discipline of fifty-eight years; how safe is this, in comparison of full prosperity and pleasure!"

Who but a real child of God could ever have suggested such a comment upon such an incident? Whose heart among ourselves, can honestly, and as in the sight of God, re-echo the sentiment!

The sick man of whom the parable speaks, had probably lain the longest there of all those who filled those porches with misery and bemoaning; and the Saviour who knew all things, knew the length, as well as the depth of his distress, and apparently on that account selected him as the object of his healing mercy. There may be, for we have met with cases such as these in our ministerial course, some truly penitent believer, among yourselves, to whom the preaching, and the counsels, and the prayers of ministers and friends, are as unavailing to bring peace, as medicine had been to bring a cure to the case before us; but take courage, you are perhaps only kept the longer and tried the deeper, that the hand of the good Physician himself may be extended to you, and that your spiritual healing may be the work of Christ alone: he will, in his good time, bestow, what all ordinances and all means, without him, never can, the "peace of God which passeth all understanding."*

Observe we next, the manner in which our Lord calls forth the desire to be healed, before he performs the cure: "He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?" Could he doubt it? Could he who knew the hearts of all men, be

ignorant of the wretchedness that dwelt within ; and had for eight and thirty years embittered to this poor sufferer, every enjoyment and every hour of life ? No, Jesus knew full well, all that the sick man wished, and all he hoped for ; but where Christ imparts the cure, the heart must be aroused, and the desires quickened, and the tongue excited to seek it. Therefore did he ask the question ; and therefore does he now, even at the present hour, and to every subject of his healing mercy, first bestow the grace to seek the boon ; which when sought for, he delights to give.

But let us for a few moments imagine the scene of the parable to be changed ; this church to be the portico beside Bethesda's pool ; yourselves the sick and suffering patients ; and the disease, not infirmity, but sin ; sin which has corrupted every heart, and perverted every way, and endangered every soul. Suppose the Saviour to enter this portico, and to apply himself to you individually, and with the same question which he addressed to the man before us, " Wilt thou be made whole ? " Are you quite certain what would be your reply ? Are you sure that there is no one here, who when he found that to be " made whole " of sin, implied the destruction of its reigning, as well as its condemning power ; the breaking off of many a dear connection, the denial of many a sinful pleasure, the discontinuance of many a vicious habit, which for a long, long season, perhaps for eight and thirty years, has been as deeply rooted in your heart, as this man's malady in his constitution, is there no one here, who like the rich young man, would turn away in sorrow, prefer

his sin to his Saviour, and refuse even spiritual health itself, at so high a cost? Alas! we fear that few assemblies, even of Christian worshippers, but contain some persons such as these. Remember, then, that we are painting no imaginary scene, when we compare the ordinances of God with the healing waters of Bethesda. For, never are the doors of God's house opened, that the waters of salvation do not flow; never is the word of life truly preached, that the Spirit of God does not "move upon the face of those waters," to impart to them the healing qualities, of which not one alone, but all, yes all, without exception and without reserve, may be partakers. Whenever, therefore, you set your foot within the walls of the temple of God, the great Lord of the fountain asks of all, of each, "Wilt thou be made whole?" And what is your reply? How many who in heart exclaim, Lord, I am whole, I need not a physician! How many who shrink from the healing process, and prefer the malady to the cure! How few who reply at once, "Lord, I am distressed, undertake for me, and do what seemeth the best!"

My brethren, were we half as conscious of our spiritual ailments, as of our bodily diseases; were we a thousandth part as anxious to be healed of the former, as to be cured of the latter, long ere this there would not have been one "blind, halt, withered," within our temple, or a single feeble one within our walls. May God of his tender mercy teach us deeply to feel our maladies, as the first step towards their removal and our healthfulness.

"The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man,

when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

How good an evidence is it that sickness, and trial, and trouble, have had their perfect work, when the pride of the heart is humbled, and the fretfulness and complaining of the lips are silenced, and we can dwell upon our sorrows without one repining word, or one distrustful thought! The sick man before us, does not breathe a syllable against the hard-heartedness of his fellow-men: that of all the thousands in that crowded city, not one had leisure enough, or love enough, to sanctify his visit to the Passover by such an obvious act of mercy as the lifting this poor sufferer into the healing pool. He simply tells the story of his own wretchedness, and the selfishness of those around him, in these affecting words, "I have no man," and "another steppeth down before me." The utmost that he dared to hope was, that now, at length, he had encountered one, who could feel for others' woes, and who might, perhaps, be intending to seat himself beside him, and there remain and watch the coming of the supernatural visitant, and place him first within the troubled waters. But Jesus had far higher things than this in store for him; he had a cure unexpected, sudden and complete for the infirmity of his body, followed, as we have every reason to believe, by the renewal of his soul. "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed and walk; and immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked."

So true it is, that he with whom we have to do, is not

only able, but willing, "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

There is, however, yet another portion of the history to be considered, which will portray the duty of man as distinctly as the former part has shown the loving-kindness of the Lord.

No sooner had the healed man obeyed the command of Christ by carrying his bed upon the Sabbath day, at the imminent peril of his life for such a breach of the ceremonial observance of that Divine Institution, than the Jews fiercely interrogated him, by whose authority he was thus transgressing. The man whose knowledge of our Lord was, as might be expected, most imperfect, still felt that he who could work so wonderful a miracle by his own power, must certainly possess a right to the obedience of those he healed; and this, indeed, was agreeable even to the dogmas of many among the Jews themselves, who justified a prophet in infringing the rest of the Sabbath, by the example of Joshua surrounding Jericho, for seven successive days, with the ark. The man who was healed, therefore, acknowledging, what the Jews denied, that Jesus was a prophet, replied at once, as sufficient authority for the act, and sufficient justification of it, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." How powerful is the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the heart which has once been really visited by his compassion and love! This healed man ventured even his life, rather than disobey the word of him who healed him. When on the great and coming day all

the generations of men shall stand together, how will the "maimed, and the halt, and the blind," who, for one act of mercy and compassion, obeyed their Divine Redeemer, without a feeling of hesitation or distrust, put us to shame, who after countless instances of mercy, far greater, and far higher than they were ever blessed with, follow him so distantly, and obey him so reluctantly and coldly! The only substantial proof that you ever can give, that the love of Christ has touched your heart, is this,—Has it left the stamp of true subjection to him there? Are you not satisfied with saying, "Lord, Lord," but are you doing the things which he commands you? How much profession of religion is there at the present day, where this first and surest fruit is wanting! Say not, deceive not yourself by thinking, that Christ has ever visited you, if a holy, consistent obedience has not been the result. If you truly know the Lord Jesus, if you have indeed received healing and mercy at his hands, you would hazard life itself rather than habitually break even the least of his commandments. For be assured, whatever be your profession of religion, the heart possesses still its native hardness, if the bright beaming of a Saviour's love upon it has failed so to soften it, that it may be moulded into some degree of conformity to his commands, or resemblance to himself; the soul still lies in all its natural dulness, if, when those rays have fallen upon it, it has reflected back no portion of the love which it received.

The man whom we have just seen condemned as a Sabbath-breaker, for carrying his bed in obedience to him who

healed him, at once evinced the falsehood of the allegation, by going straightway to the temple, to praise the Lord for all that had been so wonderfully done for him. It was in that house of God that Jesus met with him, and spoke those words which we may reasonably hope were blessed to the conversion of his soul, "Behold, thou art made whole. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

When our Lord granted the first manifestation of his love in the healing of this poor man, he found him ignorant, and he left him ignorant, of the very name and quality of his benefactor. But though he knew not Christ, he knew the way to the temple, and he not only knew, but performed the duty of carrying thither his thank-offering to God. Behold here the manner in which, while acting according to the light we possess, our God fulfils his promise, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." The Saviour completed the mercy in the temple, which he had begun at the pool: while the man who wist not who it was, when he was healed, discovered while he prayed and praised, that it was "Jesus who had made him whole." This well agrees with the gracious method in which God ordinarily deals with his creatures. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine," is one of the most consolatory of the unerring promises of God. Never are there such scriptural grounds for believing that you will be brought, in God's good time, to the fulness of the knowledge, and faith, and hope, that are in Christ Jesus, as when engaged in performing, as far as it is known to you, the revealed

will of your God. It is a blessed thing to reflect how many in every generation, as it passes through this state of suffering and probation, are first brought to feel their need of something better than this world can offer, by the pressures of affliction, or the trials of sickness. How many, who, receiving at those distressing seasons, healing grace, are led on in all holy obedience, step by step, from the bed of sickness to the temple; from the word of God to the Son of God; from bodily health to spiritual cure; until all that the Saviour has done and suffered for them is gradually unfolded to their hearts, and they have "followed on to know the Lord," their light shining more and more, until it reaches the perfect day!





Jesus prayong Tubute

JESUS PAYING TRIBUTE.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DALE.

MATT. xvii. 27.

HE came! to man from God, to earth from heaven ;
He came! the sinless to a world of sin ;
Yet dwelt the fulness of the God within,
And to his sway the conscious earth was given.
All nature knew the Holiest, as he trod
In mortal form, the hill or pastured plain :
The valleys laughed rejoicing—once again
Creation mute adored the present God ;
As when of old bright Angels left their skies,
And even JEHOVAH walked in groves of Paradise.

No flower that bloomed beneath Messiah's feet
But shed rich odors, by his footstep pressed ;
No breeze around him sported, but confessed
The Lord of nature, scattering incense sweet ;

If wound his upward path the wood-crowned hill,
The forest waved in gladness ; on the shore
The wild waves crouched before him, and forbore
The surge its angry murmurs, strangely still :
All knew their Lord : rocks, winds, earth, forest, wave :
All but the thankless thing He came to seek and save.

Yet men too knew Him, though but dimly known :
They knew him not as Godhead ; but they knew
None ever spake like Him ; none else could do
His works of power ; of woman born alone,
He swayed the subject elements : the storm,
Which but obeys Almightyness, to Him
Gave heed, what time amidst the tempest dim
Walked forth upon the wave His awful form ;
He did not wear the crown, or wield the sword,
Yet was he Judah's King, and haughty Cæsar's Lord !

Still, veiled in flesh, He willed not to disclaim
The power which Heaven permitted, man obeyed ;
Tribute, as man, the Lord of Nature paid
To those who asked it in the Roman's name,
But paid it as a God. He breathed His word
In silence to the ocean. Ocean knew
His mute command—and Simon, wondering, drew
From its dark depths an offering to the Lord ;
Thus taught He man by whom all power is given,
And on the thrones of earth he flashed the light of heaven !

“Render to Cæsar what is Cæsar’s due ;
From God withhold not God’s.”—Thus ran his word
To those who owned him Master, called him Lord ;
Their teacher, and their pure Example too.
Example, O how pure ! To God he gave
Himself—His soul—His strength—His heart—His
mind—
Powers of a God in human form enshrined
To work His Father’s will—to die—to save.—
Didst thou such tribute pay to Heaven for me ?
And shall I think it much, dear Lord, to follow Thee ?

THE HEALING OF JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER AND THE CANAANITISH WOMAN.

BY THE REV. HENRY BLUNT, A. M.

WHILE our Lord was on the shores of the Lake of Genesaret, "there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and when he saw him, he fell down at Jesus' feet," and "besought him greatly, that he would come into his house." How remarkable a contrast to the treatment which the Lord had just received on the opposite shore! But may we not ask, with David, "Is there not a cause?" Had no domestic calamity wrung the heart of the ruler—had no deep and trying affliction sent him to the Saviour, would he have been thus zealous, thus earnest in his application to the Lord of life? We cannot answer the inquiry, as it applies to the ruler, but there are few who will hesitate to do so, as regards themselves; few who will not, with shame and humiliation, confess—but for that bed of sickness—but for that worldly disappointment—but for the loss



Healing of the Canaanitish Woman

THE W. W. FORD
FIELD DEPART

NEW YORK AND
TUDOR CITY, N. Y.

of that dear friend—but for the death of that loved child—I had never sought or found the Saviour of the world.

The ruler, however, not only sought the Lord, but, as we are expressly told, he came “beseeching greatly.” His feelings, therefore, of the need of the mercy for which he sought, were strong and powerful; grief and anxiety found a ready utterance; his prayer was marked by its fulness, its earnestness, its importunity. Does this describe the nature of our petition, when we draw near to God in daily prayer? and if not, whence the difference? Alas! the difference is here. The ruler went with a heart full of trouble, and anxiety, and faith; and “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” We too often go, we fear, with a heart so little occupied by our high errand, with a soul so little impressed by our deep and urgent necessity, a spirit so little influenced by a strong confiding faith in him to whom we apply, that so far from “beseeching greatly,” we have neither desires to express, nor words in which to convey them. Learn, then, from the example before us, what is essential for acceptable prayer. Endeavor, by serious thought and holy meditation, to seek that Spirit, who alone can fill your heart with a real sense of your own danger, poverty, wretchedness, and sin; and this, accompanied, as in the ruler, by a true and living faith in the power of him to whom you apply, and you will find no difficulty in “beseeching greatly” for the aid of the good Physician. But remember, that every petition uttered in the absence of feelings such as these, falls short of that throne of grace to which you send it; and like an arrow

from a slackened bow, powerless and errandless, drops down to earth again. Examine the prayer of Jairus, and you will almost be convinced, that he must have spoken both the language of faith, and the language of the heart: "My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed, and she shall live." "For," adds St. Luke, "he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying."

Even where there are many children, and times are hard, and the difficulty of bringing them up in comfort is great, the loss, or even the sickness, of any one among them, is to the parent's heart a trial of no ordinary weight; but where the child is an only child, and the parent blessed with affluence, and his hopes and expectations are all centred upon the one single object of parental love, it must indeed be a heavy and a grievous visitation, when God is pleased to call back the precious boon which he has mercifully bestowed. That our gracious Redeemer not only well knows it to be so, but peculiarly sympathizes in trials such as these, may, we think, be gathered from the fact, that of the three memorable instances, in which he exerted his divine power over death and the grave, and broke their chains, and released their captives, and brought them back to life again, one was the case of an only brother, another an only son, and this an only daughter. Who can hear of such discriminating instances of the love and tenderness of our Redeemer, and not experience the unspeakable comfort which the apostle appears to have derived from the consideration, that we

have indeed a merciful High Priest, who can be touched, and who assuredly is "touched with the feeling of all our infirmities." Can you, then, apply to that Saviour, under any circumstances of difficulties or trials, without feeling the full "assurance of faith," that he has not only power enough, but love enough, to grant all, and more than all, of which you stand in need?

"And Jesus arose and went with him," says the evangelist, "and so did his disciples." But as they went on the way to the house of mourning, surrounded by a crowd of wondering spectators, and closely attended by the anxious father, to whose request our Lord had yielded so instantaneous an obedience, "Behold, a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched the hem of his garment, for she said, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole; and straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body, that she was healed of that plague."

It furnishes us with some little idea of the abundance of the miracles of our Lord, of which, comparatively, so few have been recorded, when we find one of the most remarkable, conveyed thus, as it were, merely in a parenthesis; so little dwelt upon, that had it not occurred during his passage to the house of Jairus, it seems probable, that it would never have been narrated; and yet few are the instances,

from which more of comfort and encouragement to the feeble or the secret follower of our Lord may be deduced, than from this simple story.

We first remark the secrecy of the application of this poor sufferer. Some had not scrupled to call aloud upon the passing Saviour, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us;" others to be placed upon their sick beds in the Saviour's path, that it might be impossible to overlook them; but here was one, who, with the natural timidity and modesty of her sex, shrunk from observation, and would not publicly ask the mercy, of which she so greatly stood in need.

We next observe the peculiar strength and energy of her faith. Many had believed that a word, a command of Christ, was sufficient to heal the worst of maladies; but none, that we are aware of, ever had faith to believe, as this poor woman did, that a single touch of his garment, yea, even of the hem of his garment, would be superior to all the physicians upon earth.

How remarkably analogous to this is the case of some few, some happy few, in every congregation! They make no loud professions, no public display of their deep conviction, of the plague which lies at their heart's core; and yet, perhaps, none have felt it more acutely, or labored under it during a longer period of wretchedness and woe. They also have "suffered many things of many physicians," and have been "nothing bettered, but have rather grown worse." The world, society, business, self-righteousness, all have prescribed for them. The world has prescribed its pleasures,

society its cheerfulness, business its occupation, self-righteousness its duties, but all equally in vain; the stream of their corruption flows on, as powerfully as ever, for the source of its pollution remains untouched; the heart is corrupt, unhealed, unaltered still. They behold, perhaps, the crowds which throng around the Saviour; for has he not said of the preaching of the Cross, as truly as of the sacrifice of the Cross, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me?" They "hear of Jesus," then, as we are told this poor woman did; they come in the crowd, and are hidden in the crowd; their malady unknown even to those who follow in the same throng, or worship in the same temple with them. Thus all unknown, and all unseen to others, they receive the living word into their hearts, they draw near by faith to the Saviour, and put forth their hand, and not only touch his garment, but hide themselves, and their own corruptions, and their woe, beneath it, even the garment of a Saviour's righteousness, and find there, where alone it can be found, their healing and their cure. These are they whom David calls "The Lord's hidden ones," of whom in the worst days of Israel's idolatry, there were seven thousand, unknown to man, but known indeed of God, and precious; hidden now, because of their humility, which courts not human observation; because of their feebleness which needs a shield, and their weakness which cannot stand upright; but one day to be revealed, perhaps, even upon earth, when their faith has been strengthened, and their love increased, as among the most devoted and consistent followers of their divine Mas-

ter ; but certainly, on the day when "the Lord of hosts shall make up his jewels," as among the brightest ornaments of their Redeemer's crown.

Doubtless it is a glorious sight to see "the trees of righteousness," as the prophet denominates the established people of God, "planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth their fruit in due season," lifting up their heads to heaven, in all the strength, and vigor, and beauty, which the dews of the Spirit have imparted, and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness have cherished, and standing unbroken and uninjured beneath the heaviest gale that blows, defying alike the tempest and the flood. It may be a less glorious, but is it not even a more encouraging sight to the Christian, to mark these same trees, "the planting of the Lord," just as they are struggling into existence, their heads for the first time emerging from the underwood, and their weak and feeble stems drawing up from amidst the shelter that has shielded them, bending beneath every wind that blows, and appearing unable to stand the shock, with which the first strong gale shall visit them? It is a blessed and a soul-encouraging sight to the Christian, because in that small and yielding sapling, he sees the stern, unbending oak of centuries yet to come, the father of the forest, upon which all storms, all tempests, shall exert their violence, but in vain. While others think only of the weakness of the tree, he is thinking of the strength and permanency of the root; he knows that, far beneath the surface, and far beyond the sight of man, the root of that frail tree has driven its fibres

firm and fast into the living Rock, and let the stem be shaken as it may above, all is secure below; and let the hurricane sweep with resistless force across the forest, and every other tree fall prostrate beneath its arm, he knows that this may bend, but cannot break; and though it stoop to earth, shall rise again the stronger and the more secure, imperishable, and indestructible, for it shall adorn the paradise of God.

But there is a time when the Lord will not permit even his "secret ones" to remain hidden from the eye of men, but will compel them to manifest their faith, that his own glory may be revealed. So it was now with this poor sufferer; she had obtained her cure, and was rejoicing in all that the Saviour had performed for her. When "Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And when all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came,"—therefore she had evidently retired to some distance, immediately upon obtaining the cure, and was not among the number of those who had denied that they had touched the Lord,—“she came trembling, and falling down before him, she told him all the truth,” “she declared unto

him before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."

Silence, which in the first instance was a proof of her modesty, would, if persevered in, now have been culpable. There is a time, brethren, when the most feeble believer among you all must not be ashamed to stand forth, and avow the mercies and the healing you have received; must be ready to confess the Lord Jesus Christ before men, and, if called upon, to tell "what the Lord hath done for your soul." He may not, and often does not, require this at the very beginning of your Christian course, at the very instant that you receive your spiritual cure; but neither will he permit you to be long concealed. The cure must be attributed to the right source, must be acknowledged as the work of the good Physician, and, as this poor woman did, you must tell "all the truth," that your Saviour may receive all the glory.

"Then Jesus said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." Are there any among you who need the peace which Christ alone can give, that "peace of God which passeth all understanding?" then receive it here. Your cure is not perfected, your healing not complete, until you have obtained peace; peace of conscience, peace of mind, peace of soul. When the Lord Jesus Christ treats as a child, and heals as a child, he also acknowledges as a child. "Ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Have you then found access to the gracious Being of whom we speak; has the fee-

ble hand of your young faith touched but the garment of the Saviour? and has the plague within been healed? then be assured that this mercy, great and wonderful, and undeserved as it is, does not stand alone. He who has pardoned your sin, has accepted your person, and now not only permits, but encourages you to rejoice in your adoption, and says, "Daughter, be of good comfort, go in peace." This is, in fact, the one great privilege of the gospel. Take this from the believer, this spirit of adoption, this assurance of his sonship, and you leave him poor indeed. For there is no middle state here on earth, as there shall be no middle state throughout eternity. We are all and each either the children of God through Christ Jesus our Lord, having been reconciled and brought near by the blood of the cross, having been united to himself and carried into his family by the Spirit of adoption, or we are at this moment outcasts and rebels, neither partakers of his grace, nor preparing for his inheritance. If not children, then enemies; but "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." How unutterably solemn the alternative! May no individual leave this house of God to-day, without endeavoring to ascertain the truth as regards himself, his own soul, and his own adoption. May none be permitted to build himself up in a false and groundless hope, or in a delusive peace; may none be satisfied until he has assuredly received that Spirit, for which none ever sought in vain, even "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

“While our Lord yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, certain which said, Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.” Perhaps our Lord knew that the ruler’s faith was weak, as he most certainly knew the fiery trial it was about to be exposed to, and in mercy to him permitted this miracle to be wrought, and that avowal of the poor woman to be made, upon which we have just been commenting, that his faith might be strengthened for the conflict that awaited it. It seems, at least, that some such thoughts were passing through the Saviour’s mind, by those kindly spoken words of strong encouragement with which he cheered him when he received the fatal message, “Only believe.” It is, indeed, a little sentence, but we shall never see that man on earth who can, with profit, lengthen it. It has a richness and a fulness which experience may, and, I trust in God, will teach you, but which words cannot describe. Would you learn its virtues, the wonder-working power of those short syllables? Go to the broken-hearted sinner, see him watering his couch with his tears, overwhelmed with a burden from which the united strength of men and angels cannot set him free; point that wretched and guilty creature to the cross of Christ, and to the Lord who hangs upon it, and say, “Only believe.” If the Spirit of God speaks them to the heart, while you address them to the outer ear, you will soon behold their wonderful effect; the heavy burden, untouched

by mortal hands, falls at his feet; he who has taken it from him will bear it for him, and he shall feel it again no more for ever. Or go to the bedside of the dying saint; do fears and doubts oppress him? is this the hour of Satan and darkness? has he for a moment, amidst the clouds that overhang him, lost sight of the Star of Bethlehem? Whisper in the ear of that desponding follower of Jesus, these little words, "only believe." The shades of darkness will disperse, the scales will fall from his eyes, the anguish be removed from his soul, faith will again resume her throne, and all will be peace.

Yes, Jesus himself had no higher and no better remedy for sin, for sorrow, and for suffering, than those two words convey; at the utmost extremity of his own distress, and of his disciples' wretchedness, he could only say, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." Believe, "only believe."

"And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn."

Who shall complain that they are subjected to the ridicule of the world, to the trial, as the apostle calls it, "of cruel mocking," when they behold their Lord, thus, at the very moment of exerting the highest attribute of Deity, "quicken- ing whom he will," calling the breathless corpse to life again, "laughed even to scorn," by these poor fallen sons of

earth! How does our indignation rise, and our heart burn within us, that the great God of heaven and earth should thus be ridiculed by the works of his own hands.

Brethren, let us learn from it at least, patiently, if not cheerfully, to bear that, which even our Lord and Master has borne before us, and will bear with us; remembering, that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him," and that a conformity with him even in these, the least of trials, shall not be forgotten on that day when we shall be also "glorified together."

"But, when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years."

How perfectly simple is every portion of this wonderful narration, how void of all display! If, as has been well observed, the very language in which our Lord speaks of heaven, marks him at once as an inmate and a sovereign there, so does the very manner in which he performed the most stupendous of his miracles, almost as certainly as the miracles themselves, establish his divinity. No impostor could have been content with such a total absence of all effort, all excitement, all display; our Lord appeared, if we may so say, scarcely conscious that any wonderful work was to be achieved. "Maid, arise," was the simple language in which

he performed a deed which, in dignity and power, might rival the creation of a universe. And is it not often thus calmly, and quietly, and unobtrusively, that he still acts by his divine Spirit, when the yet greater work of the spiritual resurrection of a soul, dead in trespasses and sins, is to be perfected? Oftentimes, how often none can tell, a single discourse, a sentence, yea, even a word, has been blessed to this great and wonderful end; no effort visible, no display of majesty and power, except to the happy soul thus raised to spiritual life. But, as in the miracle before us, "When Jesus said, Arise, he took the damsel by the hand," so now, the word of Christ's power must be accompanied by the hand of his grace, ere the miracle of mercy can be wrought, for in vain do we exclaim, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," unless his arm be indeed outstretched to draw you thence, and to give the spiritual life to which we call you. May that hand of mighty power be exerted among us this day; that you, if there be but one who is still sleeping the sleep of sin, may hear that word, "Arise!" and be so shaken from your deathful slumbers, that nothing again shall tempt you to sleep upon your post; but being thus aroused, that you may forget those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, be daily, hourly, constantly pressing forward for "the prize of the mark of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus." May we all feel how little, how less than little, there has yet been of spiritual life in our prayers, of active holiness in our conduct, of an earnest, faithful, zeal-

ous devotedness to God in our daily conversation, that we may indeed arise, as those who are risen with Christ, and seek in earnest those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

HEALING OF THE
SYROPHŒNICIAN WOMAN'S DAUGHTER,
AND THE
MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES.

BY THE REV. HENRY BLUNT, A. M.

“JESUS went thence, and departed into the coasts,” or rather into the confines “of Tyre and Sidon,” and “entered into a house, and would have no man know it, but he could not be hid: for behold, a woman of Canaan, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” She is called by St. Mark a Syrophœnician, the more usual name of a part of ancient Canaan; and a Greek, the general expression for a Gentile.

The reason for which our blessed Lord desired especially at this season to retire from the observation of men, and

would have none made acquainted with the place of his retreat, is not revealed to us. Perhaps the only cause for which any reference at all is made to the fact of his concealment may be, simply to show the strength of maternal tenderness, as manifested in the remarkable person to whom the incident refers. She had at home a daughter, who was the subject of demoniacal possession; and secret as our Lord's retirement might have been, and hidden as it was from the eyes of others, it could not escape the anxious searchings of a mother's love, perhaps the most powerful feeling by which the human heart is ever influenced.

This at once engages us on behalf of the applicant; we know that she is a parent and in sorrow; we are not ignorant of the merciful Being with whom she had to do; and we feel an interest in the result of her petition. But then there is a feature in her history, of which we have not yet thought, and which has pertained to none other that we have yet considered. She was a Gentile; all other applicants had been Jews; she was of the accursed race of Canaan, whose lives had been given to the sword of the Israelites by the express command of God himself. She had, therefore, no title to the covenanted mercies of God, which had been signed and sealed only for them "to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants," even to the believing children of the faithful Abraham. This consideration throws some doubt upon the success of her mission, and increases our anxiety to see the end. She addresses the Saviour so confidently and so appropriately, that we feel

at once this can be no common case. "She cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord thou Son of David." Whence, as a Gentile, had she learnt, thus rightly, to know the genealogy of the Messiah? and who had taught her to apply it to this obscure Stranger, who was now concealing himself in the most remote corner of Canaan, and to whom, so many far better read in Scripture than herself, had denied the title? How easy to make the inquiry; how impossible to answer! Perhaps like Cornelius and Lydia, her heart had been opened, by God, to receive the knowledge of himself: perhaps, surrounded by the debasing errors of a most foul and polluting idolatry, she alone had faithful been among the faithless, and in many a silent hour, had dwelt upon the sacred page of Revelation, and meditated upon David's root and David's branch, until, like Simeon, she had been taught of God, to wait in prayer and hope, for the consolation of Israel. There is nothing improbable in the conjecture; so far from it, that if it be not true, we know not whence she could have derived a knowledge so correctly scriptural, or how she could, thus rightly, have addressed the Saviour of the world.

We turn from the suppliant to the merciful Being to whom she spake, and how great is our surprise when we are told, "but he answered her not a word." How unlike the accustomed kindness of our Lord! We have seen him eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, and replying to their inquiries. We have seen him seated by the side of the well, in deeply instructive converse with a Samaritan

harlot. None so low, none so ignorant, none so guilty ; but he had words, and words of kindness and instruction for them all. But here he was silent : nay, even his own disciples, who were not wont to feel more tenderly, or more readily than their Master, on this occasion appear almost as if they had exchanged natures with him. They cannot hear that mother's voice, unmoved ; and while Jesus is deaf to her entreaties, they take up her cause and intercede with him, " Send her away, for she crieth after us ;" yield to her requests, heal her daughter, for it is wretched thus to listen to her reiterated supplications. This, indeed, induces the Saviour, for the first time, to break silence, but it is in words more painful to the mourner than the most obdurate silence could have been. " He answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel ;" a refusal, apparently, the sternest and the harshest that ever passed the Saviour's lips. Now mark its effects upon the applicant. Does it drive her from him ? Does it send her away in despair ? No, it brings her immediately to his feet, " Then came she and worshipped him ; saying, Lord, help me." Blessed proof that the heart is right with God, when every mark of his chastening, every infliction of his love, only draws us the more closely to himself. " As for the ungodly, it is not so with them ; but they are like the chaff which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth." Every breath of God's chastening being to them as the blast of his displeasure, and driving them but the farther from the presence of his glory.

O that the language of our hearts may be, in the words of one of God's people of old, "When the flail of affliction is upon me, let me not be as the chaff which flies in thy face, but as the grain which lies at thy feet." That it was so with the Canaanitish woman, is evident from the story; she who had followed, at a distance, during our Lord's forbidding silence, only drew the nearer in consequence of his more forbidding reply. "Lord, help me," contains the whole of her desires; she was willing to leave both the measure and the manner of the help, to him of whom she asked it. She has told him of her case, and she believes that he is too good, too skilful a Physician to need a syllable beyond the one short sentence, by which she places it unhesitatingly in his hands, to deal with it as seemeth him best.

It is a blessed thing, brethren, when in an hour of anxiety, we are content thus to place a blank in the hands of God, with sufficient confidence in his wisdom, and in his love, to feel assured that he will fill it wisely and tenderly; to cry, from the dictate of a simple faith, "Lord, help me," and to be content, although that help come in far different guise, from what we looked for. But the trial of this poor suppliant was not yet over. Jesus knew that he had to deal with a disciple, whose faith was of the highest order, and, therefore, he hesitates not to put it to the severest test. Throughout all Scripture, we read of but one who was dignified with the title of the Father of the faithful; and throughout all Scripture, we never read of a second, who was commanded to sacrifice an only son. "Jesus answered

and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

How invincible a faith, what wonderful perseverance, what deep humility! The Saviour could not cast her lower than she was content to cast herself. No term of reproach that he could apply to her, which she was not most willing to accept, and from which she could not gather arguments for his mercy. Even the very depth of her degradation, only forms a stronger plea for the extension of his love. If a dog, then still one of the household; with no title indeed to the children's bread, but with a stronger claim upon the crumbs than one more distant, though less degraded.

Does any one among you feel himself to be, at this moment, so far from God, that the rays of divine mercy have not yet travelled down through so great a distance; an alien, an outcast, a sinner, yea, the very chief of sinners; and shall this conviction stop your cry for mercy, and render you incompetent to pray! No, take encouragement from this Gentile woman; make the very depth of your degradation a plea with God for the outpouring of his mercy. He has bread for children, but are there no crumbs for dogs? Yes, be assured, that if under the old dispensation, confessedly one of severity, there was still, after the family and the household had been fed, bread enough and to spare, even for the dogs of the flock; under the gracious dispensation beneath which we live, far more than this may reasonably be expected; not only that the dogs shall be fed, but that none

are so unclean, none so separate from God, but that, if they seek it, they shall receive cleansing, and food, and raiment, and reconciliation, and adoption. Only ask in faith, nothing wavering, and you shall have more than crumbs, you shall feed fully upon him who declared "I am the bread of life, and of whom if a man eat, he shall live for ever."

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Here we behold the Saviour once more in his own true and blessed character: painful as his reserve and unkindness must have been to this poor woman, we can readily believe, that they were more painful to himself. Perfectly as he knew that her faith, though it were "tried with fire," would be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, we cannot doubt, although no such symptom is to be seen in the narrative, that he who thus for a short time placed her in the furnace, deeply sympathized with the sufferer. As the heart of the surgeon cannot but feel, although his hand will not tremble while he is probing the deepest and severest wound.

Had we been present at the close of this instructive scene, our language of commendation would, perhaps, have differed widely from our Lord's; we should have said, O woman, great is thy humility, great is thy patience under rebukes and disappointments, great is thy perseverance in prayer: he contented himself with the commendation of a single grace, and that, not the most obvious, when he said, "Great is thy faith." While men only see the fruit and the

branches, Christ sees and applauds the root from which they spring. It is faith alone which can put the crown upon the head of the Redeemer, and therefore, of all the graces which can occupy the heart, faith is pre-eminently that which "the King delighteth to honor."

It is profitable to dwell upon these instances of the Saviour's dealings with his people, while on earth, because they form, as it were, epitomes of his transactions with them, even now while in the kingdom of his glory. Let us, then, for the purpose of strengthening our faith, and increasing our love to Jesus, take as close a parallel as possible to the incident before us. I address, it may be, at this moment, some Christian parent whose heart, for years, has bled over the wayward, the ungodly conduct of a beloved child. You have made that child the subject of many an earnest and secret prayer, and yet no answer of peace has descended upon your soul. God has been silent; the Lord Jesus Christ has been silent; the Comforter has been silent. Like the disciples of old, Christian friends and ministers have interceded for you, "Lord, send her away," answered and contented. Still the answer comes not; or, if it come, it seems in anger, rather than in mercy, and the increasingly devious course of the child, for whom you pray, is to you a more severe and agonizing reply, than the harshest answer to the Canaanite. And now you are tempted to despond; you cannot believe that there is mercy yet in store for you. How often does the Christian parent need a lesson from this Gentile mother! All this is but the trial of your faith:

because your Lord sees that it is strong, and loves to exercise it; or because he knows that it is weak, and desires to strengthen it: but be assured, whatever be the motive from which he has thus troubled you, it cannot be to make you cease from desiring that which is so evidently for God's glory, but to make you pursue it with greater faith, with more unabated energy, with more unwearied prayer. In the end, you shall reap, if you faint not; for we can scarcely imagine that ever God refuses a crying child who makes the honor of his heavenly Father the limit of his prayer, and desires to ask according to the will of God. But then, brethren, in this, and in all other Christian trials, you need, what Christ declared that the Syrophenician possessed, a "great faith." Little faith, we grant, will save you, if it be but genuine; but little faith will never enable you to bear up under great trials, under severe and accumulated disappointments, and against even the Lord himself, when he contendeth with you. It was this which so peculiarly set the stamp of value upon the faith of the Canaanitish woman; it was this which distinguished the prophet of old above his brethren, and enabled him to say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." No faith but a great faith, could have prompted this; as none other could have taught the patriarch Job to exclaim, "Though he slay me,

yet will I trust him." Be content, then, with nothing less than "great faith," the only stock upon which great humility and great endurance, great holiness and great love, will ever grow.

The miracle which we have been considering was followed by others so numerous and so astonishing, that we are told "the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see, and they glorified the God of Israel." Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat,"—not intending to imply that they had fasted during three days; but that now, on the third day, their provisions were exhausted. "I will not send them away fasting," continues our Lord, "lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?" But what was impossible to the servant, presented no difficulty to the Master. "Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children."

Brethren, we rejoice that needing as we do at the present moment every encouragement, so stupendous an instance of our Redeemer's power and love, should occur thus at the commencement of our present labors. We desire to see in it an omen for good, upon the course of spiritual instruction on which we have this day entered. We would pray for you and for ourselves, for the same faith here manifested by the multitude and by the disciples—for you, that you may, like those of whom we have just read, come as the followers of Jesus; that you may come in the spirit of dependence and prayer; expecting a spiritual feast, but not from man; that you may sit down like the multitude without questioning the power of him who is to provide the food, and in the fullest, firmest belief, that it shall be provided, and that an unseen hand shall convey it into your souls: and for ourselves, that we may "take courage," though the numbers to be fed be large, the provision scanty, though we shall be often tempted despondingly to ask, whence shall we find "so much bread as to fill so great a multitude?" Though we have no stores of our own from which to furnish forth a table in the wilderness, yet that our Lord will suffer none who hunger and thirst after righteousness to "faint by the way," through our inability to feed them. No, we are constrained to believe, that he who, in breaking the seven loaves, so multiplied them in the hands of the disciples that they became sustenance for four thousand people, will still be present to stand between our poverty and your necessity; and as that merciful Being

alone can bless the meal, so will he himself provide the bread ; and while he gives it into our hands to distribute to you, will of his abundant mercy take care that every one who hungers shall be fed, and that all who are fed shall be filled.

